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BETTY SEES A FIGURE APPROACHING—SUCH A FAMILIAR FIGURE, THAT HER HEART STANDS STILL.

THAT TROUBLESOME BETTY

NOVELETTE.

Complete in this Number.

CHAPTER I.

IT is nearly high time you girls settled!" says Mrs. Grath, a trifle querulously. Here is Eleanor twenty-five, and you are nineteen next week, Betty!"

"I would not marry the best man in Christendom until I was thirty," remarks Betty, coolly. "I want to have a little time before I venture on matrimony. It must be

awful to be compelled to account to a man for all one's goings and comings. In fact, I think single-blessedness is the only blessedness;" and, tossing aside the lace she had been mending, she gives one exhaustive yawn and stands erect, looking down at mother and sister with laughter in her hazel eyes.

"If you wait until you are thirty," remarks Mrs. Grath, sententiously, "you may have to wait the remainder of your life. Good looks and youth go all too quickly."

"Oh, hear her!" cries Betty, delightedly; "and when you have heard her, Eleanor, mark what manner of woman she is. I vow she is younger and prettier than any girl of my acquaintance. It is really too absurd to call her mother. With such a model before us, do you think it likely we shall believe our good looks will leave us early? You are forty-

four, my dear, but you certainly have the appearance of thirty-four!"

The mother wears a pleased expression, all the more so because she knows that Betty is speaking the truth. There are a great many folks who declare Eleanor Grath looks nearly as old as her mother; and so, in fact, she does.

"Betty, you are a sad flatterer!" says Mrs. Grath, smiling indulgently. "But I really think I carry my years well. Heigho! I was only seventeen when I married, and Eleanor was born on my eighteenth birthday. I remember how disappointed I was my first child was not a boy; but your father was well content. To the end he worshipped me; and knowing how delicate his health was, how uncertain his hold on life, he sacrificed all his personal property to purchase me an annuity."

You see, if we had lived up to the full extent of our income, at his death we should have been paupers, because the Grath estates are so strictly entailed. And this is the reason I wish to see you settled, girls. We are enjoying now an income of five hundred pounds per annum. When I am gone you will have nothing."

"Don't speak of death, mother dear!" says Eleanor, in her soft voice; but Betty breaks into a little laugh. She objects to sentiment on principle.

"You absurd creature, you'll live to be a very old woman. You are only just beginning life. I declare I often doubt the relationship you are pleased to claim," and catching Mrs. Grath by the waist, she whirls her round the room, frantically.

"Stop! Stop! Betty, you mad thing, be quiet. I really want to talk to you seriously!" pants Mrs. Grath.

"I hate anything serious," but she releases her mother with an amused air.

The little woman stands looking up at her—for Betty is rather tall, and Mrs. Grath only boasts four feet ten in height. She is a very pretty little woman, slender as a girl, with blue, innocent eyes, and a great mass of yellow hair, in which there is not one thread of grey—just the sort of creature to be coaxed and petted, but never to be worried with business matters, or harassed in any way—a little affectionate, kind-hearted woman—a toy, but never a helpmate. This is Mrs. Grath.

"Now, mamma," says Betty, tossing the chestnut curls from her brow. "What is this all-important subject on which you wish to dilate?"

Mrs. Grath blushes, hesitates, and then stammers:—

"Why, my dear, I really think if Eleanor's engagement does not soon end in marriage, she had better give up all thought of Dick Ryder. Rhodesia is so far away, and men so soon forget. He may even now have a wife, although he doesn't care to acknowledge the fact. It is four years since he went away to make his fortune—six since he first asked for Eleanor. Mr. Congreve was saying last night that no man had a right to play the laggard in love, as he has done."

"How dare Mr. Congreve meddle with my affairs?" demands Eleanor, in most unusual passion. "Mother, how could you make him your confidante in such a matter? I will not allow it. I hate the man!"

Mrs. Grath stares at her in a scared fashion.

"I did not think you would mind," she says, tamely. "Oh, dear! how unlucky I am, so often to offend. And Mr. Congreve has been so kind, has helped me in so many ways. Really, I think that you might make your mother's friends yours."

"Friends!" echoes Eleanor, with quiet scorn. "It remains to be proved that Price Congreve is your friend. Perhaps he hopes to be something more!"

"Well!" bridling, "I am not too old to marry again!"

"Not too old, mother dear! But you would not yield my father's place in your heart to one all unworthy of it?" the daughter asks, affectionately, and Mrs. Grath begins to whimper. "Forgive me, if I spoke too sharply, but I was vexed that Dick should be discussed by—that man. Poor Dick, who has had four such cruel years of struggle and privation. Ah, dear, of yourself you never would have hinted he was faithless. You would not have hurt me so cruelly, and you don't believe it."

"No," says the elder lady, tearfully, "I don't believe it now; but sometimes I do. And oh! I am so anxious about your future and Betty's!"

"You can leave Betty to take care of herself," remarked that young lady, gruffly; "and she will be awfully glad when this absurdly sentimental scene closes"—she has furtively wiped away her tears of pity for Eleanor. "And see here, my dear little woman, if Mr.

Congreve wants to marry you, he must first get my permission. May he live till he gets it! And," with a sudden burst of temper, "if he dares to say or insinuate anything horrid of Dick, I'll return the compliment with interest! He is a sneak and an adventurer, for all his handsome face and suave manners!"

And here, to her dismay, her mother bursts into a passion of weeping.

"You are cruel and ungrateful girls," she sobs. "You think nothing of all the years I have spent in your service. I have never denied you any wish I had it in my power to grant; and now, when I speak to you for your own good, you revile me and my friends!" and rushing from the room she slams the door behind her.

"Whew!" says Betty, after giving utterance to a sound shamefully like a whistle. "What is to be done now? Shall we go to her?"

"No," answers Eleanor. "She is best alone, and when she comes down we must pretend to have forgotten all about this little explosion."

"If I thought she would marry Mr. Congreve I would go away," announced Betty, with solemnity.

"Oh, no, you would not. You would stay to look after her interests. Poor mamma, she is so innocent of guile! But I hope we need not fear such an end to her acquaintance with that man. She is only flattered by his attentions. After all these years she surely would not give us a new father!"

"And such a father! Eleanor, you must not mind what she said about Dick. He is as true as steel, and you are not the sort of woman a man easily forgets. Poor old Dick! how I should like to see his honest, ugly face again—for he is ugly. Even you, Eleanor can't pretend to think him an Adonis!"

Eleanor laughs.

"Beauty lies not so much in the face beloved as in the lover's eyes," she quotes; "and I am prouder of my Dick than I ever could be of the handsomest man under the sun! I don't care for a barber's model sort of creature, all pink and white, with immaculate curls. I like to feel that, if I am strong, my lover is stronger; that there is nothing weak and effeminate about him; that in crowded cities, where stern men meet, he can claim and hold his own."

"Dear me!" says Betty, lifting laughter-loving eyes to the ceiling. "A dissertation, or the genus man, by Miss Grath; admission free, gratis, for nothing!"

"Betty, you are incorrigible. I don't know how to talk to you. But, my dear, when your turn comes (and you can't go through life without love) I prophesy you will be as idiotic as those you most despise. You never do anything by halves. When you give your heart you will give it wholly, irrevocably, generously. Ah! my dear, may Heaven grant the man of your choice may be worthy of you!"

"Great Powers! what a mountain you have made of a mole-hill! Oh, if only I had been born a boy I should have been spared all this silly sentiment, all bother of any kind. Nell, when I was younger, I declare to you I've cried to think of all the chances of glory I had lost through my unfortunate sex; and I've spent whole hours revelling in fancy on desert islands, or sailing the wide seas king of the pirates," she lets her white, lissom hands fall upon her lap. "What chances of distinction I have lost!"

"You might have aspired to the chieftancy of a smuggler's band!"

"Thank you, no. All I did should be above board. I've no fancy for sneaking a cargo to shore in the dark, or dodging revenue officers. I think I should have made a dashing Turpin or Duval!"

"Where is the difference between smuggler and highwayman?"

"I am not of an argumentative turn of mind," Betty remarks, loftily; "and may I remind you, Miss Grath, it is time we

dressed? Mrs. Bowker does not like unpunctual guests;" so with a smile and a nod to Eleanor she goes from the room and up to her own apartment, which is very high up indeed—Mrs. Grath ranting chambers on the fringe of society's garment, if one may be allowed such an expression.

As she slowly dresses her face assumes a more thoughtful expression, for the girl is just a little troubled about her mother.

She stands a moment, looking from the tiny window, and very fair she is to see. The white shoulders and arms show very white indeed against the ruddy brown background of tresses which fall below the slender waist. The innocent, youthful face is so bright and eager, the dewy eyes so full of hope, that one quite forgets that the nose is of a nondescript kind, the chin a trifle too square for beauty. Indeed, when Betty smiles, one is apt to forget everything but the flash of white teeth, the sparkle of bewildering eyes, and the play of the pretty dimples in cheeks and chin.

A roguish, happy English girl, not without a reserve of pride and courage, such is Betty Grath; full of young, strong life, and quick, warm emotions.

Her toilet occupies but very little time; but it is most effective, though simple in the extreme. She wears a black net gown, with clusters of crimson and yellow flowers artistically placed about the train and corsage; the latter is quite high to the throat, with a tiny ruffle of lace about it, and the sleeves descend to the elbow.

Betty is a modest girl, and cares less than nothing what strictures may be passed upon her appearance so long as she feels "respectable," as she expresses it. Catching up her fan and cloak she runs lightly down to Eleanor's room.

"Are you ready?" she asks, briskly. "Oh, I say, how nice you look! That grey dress suits you so beautifully, for yours is quite the nun-like style, awfully fascinating, if it doesn't develop too far. Where is the little mother?"

"I am here," says a voice in the doorway. "Dear me, girls, how quick you have been!" and there is Mrs. Grath arrayed in all her glory, every trace of her recent agitation removed from her smiling, blushing face.

She looks remarkably pretty in a dress of lilac muslin; but Betty frowns as she walks through the hall.

"Why will she wear such *decotee* gowns?" she thinks to herself, and at the door she pauses.

"Pray draw your cloak closer, mamma. It is a chilly night, and your neck is so exposed."

Betty has such an unpleasant way of speaking her mind, and the mother stands just a little in awe of her; so she says, deprecatingly,—

"Marsden has not made it quite to order, dear; I must remonstrate with her."

"I hope you will; it isn't seemly for modest women to appear in such a fashion!" and then she subsides into silence, sorry that she has said anything to spoil her mother's pleasure, but glad that she has dared to speak the truth.

Mrs. Bowker meets them with outstretched hands, and whispers a few words to the blushing, half smiling, half apprehensive widow. Then a tall, dark man of *distingué* appearance comes up.

"Mrs. Grath, I am delighted! I hardly expected to meet you here. How charming you look! Miss Grath. Miss Betty, you should have an older chaperone. Really your mother does not look the character."

"No, does she?" breaks in that awful Betty, and "she has kept her innocence with her innocent looks. Really any wolf might pounce on this little lamb!"

His eyes meet hers—here so bright and aggressive—and then he slowly smiles.

"Had you any particular wolf in your mind when you made that speech, Miss Betty?"

"Oh, no," the widow says, quickly; "and really if you pay attention to all that Betty

says your days will be fully occupied. You must not heed my silly little girl's nonsense."

He bends his dark head, and whispers a few words she alone can hear; but she blushes as brightly as any maiden; and Betty remarks quite audibly to Eleanor:

"I shall kill him! I know I shall; and— and as for mamma, I am ashamed of her!"

"Oh, Betty!"

CHAPTER II.

A young lady has begun to sing. She has a notion that the world has lost a *prima donna* in her. As a matter of fact, she has a soprano voice of enormous power, but terribly harsh, and Betty, watching her opportunity, effects an escape to a quiet little alcove considerably removed from the drawing-room.

Here the voice comes to her softened by the distance, and with a thankful sigh Betty enters the bower of ferns and flowers. It is so dim that she has reached the one seat it boasts before she sees it is already occupied.

"I beg your pardon," she says, preparing to go, but the one occupant rises with a grave bow.

"Do not let me drive you away. If you would rather I should go I will. It is very hot in the rooms."

"I don't mind the heat; in fact, I like it," Betty answers, trying to see what manner of man her companion is, and failing because of the dim light; but—oh! I know I should make no disparaging remarks, but that girl's voice is too awful!"

"I am glad I am not the only sufferer," answers the man, with a low, amused laugh. "I felt if I remained longer I should fall on my nearest neighbour and slay him, so I came away. Does Mrs. Bowker torture her guests often in this fashion?"

"I don't know. I hope not; but it is rarely we visit here. In fact, we don't go out very much."

"And you would like to?"

"To concerts and theatres, yes; but I don't care for this kind of thing, it is so prosy. I can't invent small talk. I hate it; don't you?"

"Indeed, I do; but unfortunately I don't often meet a kindred soul. I only drifted here to-night through some unhappy accident."

"I wish Mrs. Bowker could hear you!" says Betty, with a happy laugh (she is feeling so well pleased with her new friend). "I should like to see the scowl with which she would favour you. She is a trifle terrific, you know. At least, you may not be very well acquainted with her."

"I am her cousin," comes the quiet answer, but the voice has a ripple of amusement in it. "Allow me to introduce myself in that character!"

Poor Betty collapses. If only she could get up and run away! Oh! why does not this dreadful man help her out of her dilemma? At last she says, in the meekest of voices:

"Of course you will repeat all my silly chatter to her; and she will tell mamma? Oh, dear! why did you lead me on to talk so confidentially?"

He leans forward just at the proper angle to see her face clearly—the fair, innocent, confused face, with its troubled, self-reproachful eyes.

"I shall say nothing. Your sentiments are only a faint echo of my own. It isn't good form to row with one's hostess; but there is no woman on earth who irritates me so quickly as my worthy cousin. When I left the club with Bowker I had no idea that he was bringing me to one of his wife's select entertainments. I almost understood she was out; and when I learned the truth it was too late to draw back."

"I am glad you will not repeat my words," said Betty, gratefully. "It would be so unpleasant for us all; and I don't like to hurt

other folks' feelings, although I often say awkward things!"

"In jest, I suppose? Well, for my own part, I like a little bitter with the sweet, and I would not give a fig for a tame woman, who had neither mind nor opinion of her own. She would so quickly pall on one."

"Why, I have always heard men hate women with opinions. Mamma says that is the reason I don't get on with them."

"Then you have opinions?" amusedly.

"Very pronounced ones!" nodding her head sagely. "I am bold enough to believe that men have not all the brains or all the common sense: I actually hold that they have not the monopoly of the virtues."

He laughs outright, such a hearty, healthy laugh that Betty cannot but join in; even if it is against herself.

"I am not sorry I came now," says her companion, in his peculiarly clear, low tones; "in fact, I am glad. You are a new study!"

Betty rises hastily.

"Oh, I won't have my character dissected by a stranger. I—I am afraid I have been very unconventional. All I can do now to repair my error is to go back at once to mamma!"

"Let me go with you; and you need not fear my verdict upon you would be uncharitable. I hope that girl has stopped singing!"

Together they leave the alcove, and once in the full light he turns to look at her, and with one quick glance has become acquainted with every detail of her dress, every line of the speaking face, and is apparently favourably impressed.

To the girl he is another being than the man she is in the habit of meeting. He is below rather than above the medium height; but his presence is so good, and his figure so well-knit, one is apt to credit him with more inches than he has.

For the rest he is dark and rather sallow, his eyes keen and intensely brown. The mouth, just visible beneath the moustache, is very firm; under certain circumstances it might grow cruel, and there is such a look of intellectual power about the man that quite involuntarily one accords him deference.

"That is mother," says Betty, with a glance towards the corner where Mrs. Grath is seated, "I must join her at once. Thank you for your escort!" and before he can say anything in reply she has hurried from him and joined the widow, who blushes uncomfortably as her eyes meet Betty's; but she moves her skirts to make room for her between herself and Mr. Congreve.

"What have you been doing with yourself; you look so bright? And where have you been hiding so long?" she asks. "I have missed you!"

"I got away from the singing as soon as I could, and found a place of retreat."

"And a pleasant companion?" insinuates Price Congreve, significantly.

"A very pleasant one. I would advise a few of his sex to model themselves after him!" Betty answers with flaming cheeks.

"Who is the Admirable Crichton?" questions Mrs. Grath, laughingly.

"I really don't know. We were not introduced, and, of course, I could not ask his name," Betty says, recklessly.

"My dear child! You should have some consideration for the proprieties."

"Oh, I am quite above them, and really I cannot see in what I erred. Mother, aren't we soon going home? This is abominably slow."

"Missing the pleasant companion, I suppose," draws Congreve; but Betty disdains to answer, and, seeing that the girl is growing restive, Mrs. Grath slowly and reluctantly rises.

"Betty is not used to society hours yet; she is so young—but that is a fault which will mend with every passing day. Good-night, Mr. Congreve."

He bends over her, saying a few words in a low voice, and the girl is angry to see her

mother's eyes droop before his, and the pretty face flush with unconcealed pleasure.

"I hate that man!" she says, before they are out of hearing, and Congreve smiles unpleasantly. "My day will come," is what he thinks, but Betty does not give a thought to the future, as she seats herself beside Eleanor in the hired fly.

"Really," begins the pretty widow, "really, Betty, you have behaved shamefully throughout the whole evening. If you cannot conduct yourself with greater propriety you must remain at home. First, you hide yourself away from everyone; then you appear in company with a man you do not know; lastly, you grossly insult my friends."

"At all events," the girl retorts, half-sulkily, "I did not allow any man to compromise me by his attentions!"

Mrs. Grath begins to cry, and, as usual, Eleanor comes to the rescue. She is essentially the peacemaker; and now she adroitly turns the conversation into other channels, so that when home is reached Mrs. Grath is in her usual state of beaming content. Betty is first to go upstairs, and Eleanor is considerably surprised, when she reaches her room, to find the girl waiting for her.

"I'm not in the least tired," she says, "and I feel so wretched I cannot rest! Oh, Nell, dear old Nell, I am quite sure mother is going to make a wreck of her life!"

"No, no!" cries Eleanor, turning pale. "Do not think it, do not believe it! Poor little mother! If only she were as wise as she is kind."

"But she isn't!" interrupts Betty, "and Price Congreve knows her weakest points. She is completely fascinated by him. She believes she loves him—even I, who hate him, cannot help confessing he is very handsome—and one day she will leave us Mrs. Grath to return Mrs. Congreve."

"No, no! She would never hide such an important step from us."

"As you like, Eleanor; a puppet is not without honour save in his own country, and I can see through a brick wall (if there's a hole in it) as quickly as most people. But you don't see with my eyes, so the catastrophe when it occurs will be all the more startling to you. I shall manifest no surprise!"

Eleanor comes to her sister's side with a very troubled face.

"I wish you would not say such things, dear! I cannot think that, after years of fidelity to father's memory, mother would marry a man of whom she knows literally nothing. Oh, if only Dick were rich enough to send for us, as he used to dream of doing!"

"Mother wouldn't go; she is afraid of crossing the sea, and she would not lose her lover. Poor little mother! Poor little mother!" and there is infinite pity and tenderness in the girl's sweet voice. "Well, if the worst comes, you have Dick to comfort you, and you would not mind roughing it for his sake; and I, being free, shall watch over the mater, and be always at hand to help her."

"But one day you will marry!"

"Oh, no! I am not a favourite with the sterner sex. I am too fond of my own way, my own ideas! Why, I actually overheard Mr. Bowker's brother say to a friend, 'Betty Grath is a good-looking girl, but she is too confoundedly cheeky!' (the last word in a whisper), and then she laughs. "One day I shall repeat his words to him. Oh, gracious, how I shall frighten him!"

The door slowly opens, and Mrs. Grath's blonde head appears.

"I heard voices," she says, "and came to warn you it is already two o'clock! Betty you naughty girl, you have lost your beauty sleep. Run off to bed at once!"

"To hear is to obey; but what a pity you came on the scene just now! I was just regaling Eleanor with the story of my latest conquest. Mother, would you seriously object to Augustine Bowker as a son-in-law? He has no vicious habits, does not smoke, abjures

clubs; and, in fact, poses as that very nice man we meet in tracts, and nowhere else!"

"Betty, I never know when you are in earnest. It is true Mr. Bowker has proposed for your hand. The match would be an excellent one!" But the girl has run lightly from the room, leaving Eleanor to explain matters to her mother.

The little widow is certainly an affectionate and anxious parent, and, with the morning, her first thoughts revert to her girls.

"They will be so tired after their unusual dissipation," she says. "They shall have breakfast in their own rooms!"

So she eats hers in solitary state, dawdling over her letters. There is one from Price Congreve, praying her to grant him an interview on the following day. She blushes, sighs, hesitates, and we all know that the woman who hesitates is lost.

The last of the pile is from a very old school-friend living in Essex. She begs that the girls may come to her for a month. "The country air will do them a world of good, and I should be glad to know them. I have no children of my own. I would be glad, too, if I could prevail on you to join them, but I know from old experience that you cannot be happy save in town. I will meet your girls myself, and, when their visit ends, will myself bring them back to you."

When the sisters at last appear she hands the letter to Eleanor, bidding her read it aloud, and positively watching her face as she does so.

"She is very kind," begins Mrs. Grath, "but I think we are best at home!"

"I shall not leave you, mother!" breaks in Betty. "I should like to hear how you would get on without us?"

"You silly child, I shall do very nicely, and Mrs. Bowker is always pleased to have me there. I should like you to start for Torkerton in two days!"

"Unless you command me to go I shall remain here!" says Betty, stoutly.

"Then I do command. It will be best for you in every way!"

"There is nothing left for me but obedience," the girl sadly answers, "but remember, I go unwillingly. I am quite sure that harm in some way will come of our visit. I wish Mrs. Huntley had been at the bottom of the sea before she remembered our existence!"

"Mother, you will be lonely!" pleads Eleanor, but the little woman answers—

"I have plenty of friends, who will not let me feel my solitude!"

So it happens that two days later the sisters travel to Torkerton, leaving Mrs. Grath behind them. At parting, Betty clings to her mother.

"Dear, don't do anything rash. When we come back let us find you as you are now. I could not bear to see you changed!"

"I shall not change!" but something in the sweet treble voice makes Betty ill at ease, and the sisters make their journey almost in absolute silence. They are met at Torkerton by Mrs. Huntley, a comely woman of fifty, with keen grey eyes and a fresh colour. She gives them the heartiest of welcomes, and is so kindly, so motherly, that for awhile even Betty forgot her fears.

CHAPTER III.

Three weeks pass quickly with the girls. Torkerton farm is a model one, and nothing can exceed the kindness with which both host and hostess treat their guests.

Betty, as usual, is prime favourite, but Eleanor feels no jealousy. She is used to seeing her sister preferred to herself, and takes it quite as a matter of course. Then, too, she so truly and warmly loves her that she is proud of her conquests.

"It must be lovely here in the summer!" says Betty one day. "I wish mother would take a nice little house down here instead of keeping those horrid, dingy apartments. I

hate London, and I don't care a brass button for society."

"Perhaps, young lady, you would sing another song if you were compelled to remain year in and year out. How would you like to spend a wet winter here?" asks Mr. Huntley, pinching her ear.

"Oh, I could find plenty of work. I should learn to make butter, cure hams, and all that sort of thing. Oh, yes; because my hands are white and smooth, you think I am fit for nothing but play!"

"Letters for you, miss," announces a trim maid, and Eleanor eagerly receives them. One is from her mother, but the postmark puzzles her.

"Burnham! Betty, who does mother know at Burnham?"

"How should I know. Open the letter and we shall soon hear," and Eleanor, obeying, begins to read. Suddenly her face whitens and her hands tremble so they can scarcely hold the dainty, perfumed paper.

"Give it me," says Betty, in a hoarse voice, "there is something wrong," and, snatching it from her sister, she runs her eyes quickly over the few lines:—

"MY DARLING GIRLS,—

"You will be surprised to learn I am staying at Burnham. I arrived here yesterday, and intend to stay a week unless something occurs to spoil our plans. ("Our plans!" interpolates Betty.) Yes, dears, I know you will be surprised, and I am afraid a little angry, when I tell you I have changed my condition. We were married two days since—Mr. Congreve and I. It seemed wiser to get the ceremony over before your return, and to save all bother. Your new father wishes me to say that nothing is to be changed, save that you will have a father's care as well as a mother's love, and I hope that you both will prove dutiful daughters. On Wednesday next we return to the old apartments; on Thursday you will join us. I am writing Mrs. Huntley by this post.—With fondest love from myself and husband, I remain, your loving mother,"

"MINNIE CONGREGRE."

With a tragic gesture Betty casts the letter down and rushes from the room. Eleanor, full of fear of what she may do in her passion, would follow, but Mrs. Huntley restrains her.

"She is best alone," she says. "My poor girls, this is a bitter blow to you!"

"Oh," breaks in Mr. Huntley, "it may all prove for the best. What sort of fellow is this new father, Eleanor?"

"He is not a good man, I am sure," she answers, distressfully. "I cannot tell you why Betty and I so dislike and distrust him, unless it is by instinct. But he is very handsome, and can be pleasant, too. He has completely fascinated mamma. Oh! poor mamma, she is so easily deceived," and, burying her face in her hands, she weeps quietly, but none the less bitterly; whilst Mrs. Huntley tries vainly for very long to comfort her. At last she lifts her head, "Forgive me, I have been a great trouble to you, but the shock was so cruel that I seemed to lose my balance all at once. I will not vex you with my tears again, but I must ask you for your advice, although I am afraid if it does not agree with Betty's wishes she will not act upon it."

"My dear girl," says the farmer, before his wife can reply, "there is nothing left you but to be reasonable. Your mother is a pretty woman, and it is quite natural she should marry again. Let us hope her choice has been a wise one (we all give the bridegroom the benefit of the doubt until we have proved him). Take my advice. Write a dutiful note to your mother, saying all the pretty things the occasion demands, and at the time appointed join her in a friendly fashion. To use a convenient vulgarism, it is of no use to 'cut off your nose to spite your face,' and if you prove unamenable to reason, you cannot fail to make matters hard for your mother."

"It goes against the grain," Eleanor says, dolefully, "but I know that your advice is good, and I will try to act upon it," and then Mrs. Huntley kisses her, pats her shoulder affectionately, and bids her go to Betty.

"She will have exhausted her grief now, and will be ready to listen to you."

Eleanor is rather doubtful, but she goes up to her sister's room with a heavy heart. Thrice she knocks before the door is opened to her, and Betty, standing slim and straight, with white face and flashing eyes, demands what she wants.

"Let me come in, dear! I want to talk to you about—about this unhappy affair," and her voice quivers ominously.

"All the talking in the world won't undo it. Let it alone!" says Betty, in a hoarse voice, but she allows Eleanor to enter. "What are you going to do?"

"What is there for us to do but accept the inevitable with the best grace we can? Oh! Betty, don't look so strange; you frighten me. If only you would cry it wouldn't seem so hard to bear."

"Let those find relief in tears who can. Mine do not come easily, and—and I would not cry now if I could. Oh! if only I could punish Price Congreve as he deserves I should be content!"

"That would only hurt mother, and we may be mistaken in our estimate of him."

"But we are not. He is an adventurer and a rascal. He will break mother's heart, and ruin our happiness. I felt when we came away that something dreadful would happen; but the quiet life here, and the kindness we received, made me forget my fears. Oh! why did I not defy all authority, and stay at home with mother?"

"She would still have found means to marry without your knowledge. Dear Betty, shall I tell you what our friends advise, and what I feel is best for us to do?"

"Oh, yes, you can tell me if you choose," and Eleanor proceeds to do so; but when she begs Betty to join with her in writing a note of congratulation the girl flashes passionately upon her. Her hazel eyes are almost black with rage and scorn.

"You may please yourself, Eleanor, but I never will congratulate mother upon her certain misery! Oh, you need not look so scared! I shall go back with you, and shall remain at home until my respected stepfather thrusts me out into the world. You are easily frightened; I am not, and mother will want a protector soon. There, say no more on the subject, I won't listen to you."

This is the attitude she assumes through all the following dreary week. Mr. Huntley stares often, and with wide eyes, at her. Can this be Betty Grath, this girl with the white face and sombre expression, with lips set in a hard line, and eyes dark with impotent anger?

He is almost relieved when she goes, though, in truth, he is very fond of the girl.

"There'll be mischief," he says to his wife, and she answers, sadly—

"I'm afraid there will; Betty is not a docile character."

No one meets them at Finsbury Park, and, contrary to previous arrangement, Mrs. Huntley does not accompany them, feeling perhaps she would be just a little bit *de trop*—afraid, too, lest Betty should make a scene. The girl preserves her quiet, stony manner throughout, and even when her mother comes timidly forward to meet them, she suffers no change.

"You are not angry, Betty?" the little woman says. "And he is so good to me!"

"You had a perfect right to please yourself," she answers, coldly, for her heart is very sore; but her eyes flash dangerously when she sees Eleanor submit to Mr. Congreve's kiss, and her face grows a little whiter. With a smile that has an element of triumph in it he tenders his hand to her, and would repeat his very paternal salute, but she draws quickly back.

"Thank you, no! Our relationship is not close enough to warrant such a familiarity. Mamma, am I to have my old room? Thank you," and she goes slowly upstairs, Price Congreve looking frowningly after her.

"Do not mind her," whispers his wife. "She is tired, and a trifle vexed with us for our secrecy, and you know she has been spoiled from her birth."

He smiles down at her. "I shall not forget, Minnie. Your lightest wish is law to me; and I am quite prepared to be very fond of Betty if she will let me;" but, despite his fair words, his heart is very bitter against the girl.

It must be confessed that in the days immediately following, Betty is not a pleasant companion, and she never relaxes her watchfulness of her stepfather. She ascertains quickly he has no occupation of any kind; she doubts if he has any assured income, having seen her mother supply him with money once or twice. But she says nothing; there is no one in whom she could confide. Eleanor has in part gone over to the enemy—that is, seeing Congreve's apparent devotion to her mother, she is learning to think that all along they have misjudged him. He is very kind to her, very forbearing with Betty, who treats him with icy disdain.

Between Mrs. Congreve and her youngest daughter there has risen a great barrier of constraint, which one cannot, the other will not seek to break down. Yet all the while the child's heart yearns for the old loving intercourse, and aches intolerably as she sees this man she so distrusts preferred to herself in all things—for Mrs. Congreve simply adores her husband, and ministers to his wants as though he were the Grand Sultan, and she his slave, and this submissive devotion angers Betty the more.

In early May a letter comes from Dick Ryder, now settled at Rhodesia—a letter full of hope and love, concluding with an earnest entreaty that Eleanor will go out to him by the next mail; an old friend and his wife who are returning to Rhodesia after a brief holiday will take all care of her, and they will be married as soon after her arrival as possible. He is prospering now beyond his wildest dreams. It has all been a sudden stroke of luck, and what grand luck it is that gives him his sweetheart after all this weary waiting!

"How shall I go and leave you unhappy, Betty?" questions Eleanor, tearfully. "Oh, if I could take you with me!"

"My place is here, with mamma! One day she may want me, though she does not now—and you will be too far away to give help if help is needed."

"Oh, Betty, if only you would disabuse your mind of such suspicions! If only you would be less bitter!"

"Hush! all the talking in the world won't change me; let us speak of your wedding. I should so like to see you converted into Mrs. Ryder, to wish you happiness at the altar, and be the first to kiss you. Yes, I vow I would cheat Dick out of his prerogative. But that is not to be, and so let us turn our attention to your outfit."

"Oh, Betty, will he be disappointed when he sees me? It is so long since we parted, and I have grown older and graver."

"And dearer to him than ever. And if you are older, why, so is Dick!"

Mr. Congreve says all that is kind and appropriate to Eleanor, even offers suggestions concerning her outfit, and forwards her going in every way, until Betty says savagely to herself,—

"He is glad to be rid of one of us; but he will not find it an easy matter to shake me off. I'll be an old man of the sea to him," and never for a single moment is her distrust of him shaken.

It is a heavy day for her when she bids good-bye to Eleanor. As the latter clings weeping to her, it seems she is losing her last friend, and the bitter sense of loneliness oppressing her is almost more than she can

bear. But she sheds no tear, she makes no moan.

"I can't cry!" she says, in a choked voice. "I wish I could, because I should the sooner forget. But you know, Eleanor, that I love you—love you—love you, with every heart-beat. Heaven bless you, darling, keep you happy, and grant that your love for me may never grow less!"

"Oh, Betty! I feel I ought not to go; you will be so lonely. It is selfish to leave you just to seek my own happiness."

"And to make Dick's," gently. "He has the first claim upon your heart and thoughts. There, let me go. You will be braver then. Good-bye. Oh, my dear, good-bye! See, here is mamma waiting for the last word."

"Mother, oh mother! if we never meet again, remember I always held you dear!" and the little woman weeping quietly says that "partings are so sad, but travelling is swift nowadays, and no doubt Dick will soon bring her back again." And Eleanor feels, with a jealous little pang, Price Congreve will console her mother for her loss. And she carries away with her the memory of Betty's stony face and tearless eyes, to haunt her many a day.

CHAPTER IV.

It was very dull for Betty, when Eleanor was gone. Mrs. Congreve had ceased to invite her to join in her pleasures, and a new set the girl did not know began to frequent the pretty apartments.

Choice dinners were given, expensive excursions undertaken, and, although nothing was told her, Betty knew that money was being spent like water. She kept mostly to her own room; but sometimes, when by chance the newly-wedded pair were alone, she would join them, although she hated doing so, because Price Congreve had cast aside all shadow of deference to her, and her mother saw things only through his eyes.

Just now, when the glamour of her new wifehood was upon her, she seemed to have but small love for Betty. In fact, she regarded her as a very unruly and troublesome girl. Many a time she wished herself away, and but that it seemed her duty to stand by her mother, she would certainly have gone.

Things went on in this fashion until July, when the Congreves spoke of leaving town; but not a word was said as to Betty's sharing their holiday, and she wondered what she should do, if left to her own devices.

One night, when the apartments are full of guests, she steals downstairs in search of a book. The room is in semi-darkness, and entering it she has secured the volume, and is about to return to her own chamber, when two men enter through the folding-doors. Betty cannot see their faces, but she catches a glimpse of the room beyond, with its little crowd of men, who do not look quite gentlemen, and the laughing, babbling women with their indelicate dresses. Are these her mother's friends? Is that her mother, that little, smiling woman in a lavender gown, which displays so liberally the white, plump shoulders, and pretty arms?

A sick sense of shame oppresses her, and as she moves noiselessly towards the opposite door one man says in a low, but perfectly clear voice—

"Lots of pretty women here! At least, they look pretty. But then fine feathers make fine birds!"

"Yes, but there are precious few feathers; and what a fool little Congreve is making of herself. When her money is gone, what on earth does she think of doing? I know, for a fact, Congreve has nothing of his own. He lives by his wife, and then he is six or seven years his wife's junior."

Poor Betty, standing there in the shadows! Cannot you imagine all she is suffering.

"If I were a man," she says to herself, again and again. "Oh, if I were a man, I would make them eat their words about mother!"

Wholly unconscious of what she is doing, she still stands listening, and the second man says—

"Where's the ex-widow's youngest girl? No one ever sees her now. She was rather pretty, they say!"

"She was awfully chic; not a bit like her frolicsome mother or staid sister. I wonder Congreve did not go for her!"

"Pooh! the girls have got nothing. The mother has only an annuity. When Congreve has raised as much as he can upon it I'll bet he cuts the matrimonial yoke, and flies to fresh fields and pastures new."

And then, with a sudden sense of calamity upon her, Betty contrives to tear herself away, and to go so quietly that the two men hear nothing, see nothing.

That her mother should be so lightly spoken of. Oh! the pain, and the shame of it will kill her. She can scarcely breathe in the tainted atmosphere of this house. What shall she, what can she do?

It is useless to speak to Mrs. Congreve, to tell her all she has overheard. She would not be believed. No, she must bear all in silence, hoping for the good to come which seemed so far away.

For days her mother has held very much aloof from her, and when by rare chances they find themselves *de-a-tte* Mrs. Congreve has been constrained and nervous in her manner. Consequently, Betty is not a little surprised the next morning to receive a message from her, requesting her to come to the breakfast-room at once. She loses no time in obeying, but it certainly annoys her very greatly to find Price Congreve with her mother.

"You wanted me, mamma," she says, quietly.

"Sit down, if you please," Congreve answers for his wife. "We have rather an important matter under decision, and as it concerns you only, I beg your undivided attention."

"I prefer to stand."

"As you will. From the communications your mother has made to me, and from my own observations, I am well aware that you are altogether discontented with your present life. We have honestly tried to do our duty by you, but you persist in regarding us as your enemies, and doing all in your power to render your mother unhappy. For her sake I should be glad if you would find a home elsewhere."

"Is it your wish I should go, mother?" the girl asks, in a low, strange voice.

"Oh, Betty! you know that I love you! But—but why are you so difficult to deal with? Why won't you try and be more like our dear Eleanor?"

"You shall not excite yourself," says Congreve, laying his hands affectionately on the little woman's shoulders. "For my sake, be calm."

"I will, I will. But oh! if Betty had been a good girl, how happy we should have been! Yes, child, I think it better you should leave home for awhile."

"You are that man's mouthpiece!" Betty says, pointing a scornful finger at Congreve. "You never in your life before did or said an unkind thing. Oh, I do not misjudge you, mother! I am not angry with you; but as you wish it, I will go away."

"I am sure, if you are only reasonable, dear, Mr. Congreve will allow you to stay," begins the poor, weak woman; but the warning touch of those strong, white hands upon her shoulders effectually stays her words.

"I do not wish to stay where I am only an intruder!" Betty says, loftily, though, indeed, her anguish almost chokes all utterance; "and, until I can find work, I am sure Mrs. Huntley will take me in!"

"There is no occasion for you to apply to Mrs. Huntley. My wife has already secured the post of companion and secretary for you."

"Oh! this is not the outcome of passion! You have been maturing your plans all along! Mother, how could you do it? To whom am I engaged?"

"To Mrs. Fyson. And, Betty, dear, we shall not be far apart; only a matter of half-an-hour's drive—that is, when I return to town. The salary is good—thirty-five pounds a year—and, as you don't seem likely to marry, it is best you should begin to earn your own bread. I have nothing to leave you, and I have no doubt the quiet life will suit you."

"Mrs. Fyson is a valetudinarian, is she not?" the girl cuts in, coldly.

"She is a sad invalid, my dear."

"And it will be part of my duty to humour her caprices? When do I go?"

"On Friday," says Congreve. "This is Tuesday. You have two whole days for preparation. I hope that your new life may prove pleasanter than the old. If you would like me to escort you to Providence Villa I shall be glad to do so."

"Thank you. I am not incapable of caring for myself. May I go to my room now? I have a great deal of work to do."

"And Betty—oh, Betty! don't leave your mother in anger!"

"I am not angry, mamma—at least, not angry with you," and, bearing herself calmly to the last, she goes out and up to her own room.

What a pale, changed Betty it is that stands before the open window! It seems to the girl her heart must break, with its load of pain and desolation.

A few months ago she had been so happy, so happy! And now? Well, now her own mother wished for her absence. She was to be an outcast from the home her own father's loving thoughts had prepared for them.

"I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!" she says, under her breath, and flings her arms wide upon the empty air. "No one loves me, no one needs me! Oh, Heaven, in mercy take me home!"

Ah! but she is young and strong, and sorrow rarely kills. So she works indefatigably through the two days left to her, and long before they are over has completed all her arrangements, so that on the third day she has nothing left to do.

Dressing herself with care, she goes down, only to be met by a maid.

"If you please, miss," she says, "Mrs. Congreve said I was to give you this, as she was obliged to go out."

The girl's white face grew hard, and her eyes are dark with pain as she takes the note.

"Her mother out! At such a time! Must she go without farewell?" For a moment an insane desire possesses her to shriek aloud; but Betty has a will of her own, and so conquers that momentary weakness.

All she says is, "Thank you, Susan; you may go," and then she reads the brief, self-excusing lines:—

"Dear, Mr. Congreve thinks it best we should part in this way. He is afraid that my health and happiness alike may suffer through any scene between us, so I say good-bye now. I shall not return until I know you have started for Providence Villa. I hope you will be very happy, and that you will soon come to visit us. For your own sake, darling Betty, try to conquer your prejudices; and, although my conduct may seem strange, remember I am acting for your good; and that I am always your loving mother."

Mechanically Betty folds the note, leaving it upon the table.

"A mother's tender care!" she says, bitterly. "I have no mother now! I am all alone!"

And then, still quietly, still without a tear or a sigh, she gathers together her belongings, and bids a silent farewell to the house that has sheltered her since her father died.

She knows perfectly well to what life she is going. She will be secretary, maid, companion—everything, in fact, to a disagreeable woman, whose whole thoughts are engrossed by her own imaginary sufferings, her own peculiar and uncharitable religion. But she does not waver.

"I would die rather than return to his roof!" she says, with the vehemence of youth. "He has stolen mother's love from me, and I never will forgive him!"

On the second morning after her arrival at the villa (which, by the way, is but little removed from Twickenham), she is going upstairs, when she sees a man descending, and remembers that a maid had told her Dr. Wharton was with her mistress. She steps aside to let him pass; and then, as her eyes meet his, gives a quick little cry of surprise, which is echoed by him. It is the stranger of Mrs. Bowker's party. She has never dared to ask his name or from whence he hailed. A very pleased smile brightens his face as he joins her.

"This is indeed an unexpected *rencontre*!" he says, offering his hand. "I have often wondered if we should ever meet again; and I had not the faintest idea that you were related to Mrs. Fyson. I wonder I have not met you here before?"

"I am not a relative," Betty says, bravely, "but a hired servant. I am only Mrs. Fyson's companion. I came here yesterday."

A genuine sympathy is in his voice as he says,—

"You have had troubles since we met!" and his eyes rest pitifully on her plain, black gown. She is quick to read his thoughts, and says hurriedly,—

"Not trouble of that kind, but my only sister is gone to Rhodesia, and my mother has married again. Mr. Congreve and I do not agree very well, and so I left home!"

"Congreve! the name is familiar to me. Oh, I know now! You are Miss Grath! I remember hearing of your mother's second marriage from Miss Bowker." Then as his eyes rest on the pale, small face, so changed, so saddened since he saw it last, he says, kindly, "You are not well; you have been worrying a great deal lately, and Mrs. Fyson is not a cheerful companion. Now, remember, you are not to be frightened by her frequent swoons and hysterics. They are altogether frauds, neither are you to allow her to domineer over your every action. She is as well and strong as you, though you could not make her believe so, and if she is especially trying refer her to me. I should like to know you regard me as a friend!"

"You are very good!" says Betty, shamefacedly, a most unaccountable shyness possessing her. "But I must not encroach upon your kindness. I must learn to fight my own battles, Doctor—Doctor—"

"I am Hector Wharton, very much at your service, and as confidence begets confidence you will perhaps tell me my new friend's name in full?"

"It is very ugly—Betty Grath—it couldn't well be uglier. Oh, there is Mrs. Fyson's bell, and you will please excuse me now!"

"Certainly, but I shall see you to-morrow. I am going to prescribe for you as well as our invalid upstairs. Good-bye, Miss Betty!" and with her heart beating faster than ever in all her life it has done before, the girl runs upstairs.

"How kind he is!" she thinks. "How lucky I am to find such a friend!" and the world is all the brighter to her for that chance meeting.

CHAPTER V.

"Miss Betty, you have neglected my instructions. You have not been outside the house for two whole days!"

"I have been very busy, Dr. Wharton, and I am not my own mistress."

"Get your hat and what wraps you require. I am going into the village. You can walk with me, and I'll explain to Mrs. Fyson. I rule her, in my turn as she rules others. She won't dispute my authority."

He is very masterful, and Betty has not lost all her mischievous propensities; so with a little defiant, upward look she says—

"But I am not Mrs. Fyson, and I decline to obey orders."

A faint, amused smile plays about his mouth.

"I do not understand the art of entreaty. I should not apply it to you if I did; it would only foster your natural obstinacy. Miss Betty, I am waiting!"

"Well?"

"I shall give you just five minutes to dress."

"But I am not going. I prefer staying at home!"

"This is utter nonsense!" says Hector, seating himself resignedly, "and an awful waste of time. See here, I will let you off on condition that you tell me honestly the reason of your refusal. Is it because you dislike me, or ashamed to be seen in my society?"

A hot flush mounts Betty's face.

"Of course it is not that, Dr. Wharton."

"I believe it is. I can't see any other possible objection to the walk; and, Miss Betty, you may rest assured that I shall not press my intentions upon you." He takes his hat and seems as if about to go, and Betty, sorry and ashamed, hesitates a moment; then says, quickly,—

"Don't draw such hasty conclusions. I—I will go, if you please!"

"Not unless you are quite willing," he answers, bending dark, amused eyes on the downcast, blushing face. "Are you?"

"Yes," very meekly, and she goes away to make ready, just a wee bit angry with herself that she has yielded to him; for Betty prides herself on her consistency, and why should she wish to please this man, who is all but a stranger to her? Why should he have that strange, mysterious power over her will?

Once out on the road Dr. Wharton turns to her.

"Isn't this better than staying at home reading a washy novel to Mrs. Fyson, or tending her imaginary ailments? Why on earth were you so ridiculous about the matter?"

"Dr. Wharton, you are not very polite," in an offended tone.

"No!" coolly. "I pretend to nothing but truthfulness; and I am afraid, Miss Betty, you have a very bad temper, are ready to fire up with or without occasion. Then you are wilful, too!"

"You said once you did not like tame women," the girl interrupts, and then she flushes crimson. How could she be so foolish as to let him learn she has ever thought of him since Mrs. Bowker's party?

A new light leaps into the brown eyes.

"So you remember that very absurd speech of mine? Well, it is true, for all its absurdity; but I did not say I liked a virago, or that a woman should have her own will and pleasure in everything. I am quite sure that when I marry my wife must occasionally submit herself to me."

"You won't be satisfied with occasional submission," Betty says, saucily. "You are so very autocratic. Your wife will have to be an echo of your own thoughts and opinions—a very faint echo, because you won't allow of rivalry, and the glance she gives him is so full of mischief, pure and simple, that he laughs a little before he says—"

"It seems we each have but a poor opinion of the other, that we are each bent upon insulting the other—a modern Beatrice and Benedict!"

"Ah, but they agreed in the end," Betty answers, quickly. "I always think it a pity Beatrice succumbed; but I daresay she led Benedict a very sad life after marriage. He deserved it for his former impertinences."

"And Beatrice was not impertinent! Not caustic, or unjust?" smiling.

"Never!" mendaciously.

"I cannot compliment you upon your truthfulness, Miss Betty; it is more than open to doubt. It strikes me forcibly that your moral health is in a very bad condition, and calls for instant attention. However, I am a merciful man, and will not hurl the avalanches of my indignation upon you now. I will wait a mere

fitting opportunity. That is my house—that red one on the crown of the hill."

"And do you live quite alone?" Betty asks, ignoring his first speech.

"With the exception of the necessary servants. I have an admirable housekeeper."

"It must be horribly lonely. Haven't you a sister who would keep house for you?"

"I haven't a relative at all (save Mrs. Bowker), thank Heaven. I am a most fortunate man!"

"Fortunate! I should not like to be so much alone in the world, to feel that my misfortune or prosperity was nothing to anyone."

"Oh, a man generally finds his best friends amongst strangers," calmly. "I am well content to stand alone. I suppose a girl would feel different."

"Yes. Dr. Wharton, where are we going?"

"To Forbes Wood, and then back again. Don't you like the scenery round?"

"Yes; but you said you were going into the village."

"I claimed the privilege of your sex, and changed my mind. It is pleasanter by this road, and one meets fewer people. I hate popular promenades."

Then he turns to look at her. Her eyes are bright, and there is a flush upon her cheek.

"You are more like the girl I met at Bowker's now. Exercise is good for you. Will you walk with me to-morrow? Unfortunately you have no chaperone, and I—well, neither have I," with a laugh, "but we are both unconventional people, and can dispense with ceremony."

"But Mrs. Fyson," begins Betty, when the doctor says sharply—

"Leave her out of the question. She has nothing to do with it."

"She is my employer," demurely. "She has a perfect right to all my time."

"A right she will not have the chance to exercise, and I have only to hint that unless you set aside a certain time for relaxation she must soon look for another companion. And as she actually likes you (wonders will never cease), and stands in awe of me, she will not interfere with any arrangements you may make."

He has been speaking authoritatively; but now his tone changes, and with a gentle, respectful touch he has taken her hands in his.

"Let me be your friend. We are both lonely folk, and think what an advantage it will be for each to rub his or her angles against the other until we become more like civilised creatures!"

"Thank you, Dr. Wharton, for the hint so delicately conveyed," says Betty, sanely, though her heart is beating fast with unaccustomed emotion: "The duration of our friendship will entirely depend upon your own good behaviour. Now,"—drawing her hands from his—"I think we had best be going home. It is getting late, and I shall be wanted."

"Miss Betty," he says, after a pause, "do you often hear of your mother?"

"Neither of nor from her frequently. Just once in a while I get a meagre note. Of course, I could call upon her at her own residence; but I cannot, will not, meet Pricc Congreve. He robbed me of home and my mother's love. I am not likely to forget or forgive that easily."

"If I could do as I would," says Hector, viciously striking off the head of a tall nettle, "you should never see either of them again."

"What! not my mother?" with wide-open eyes.

"Certainly not. She has proved herself 'too bad a mother and too good a wife,' to parody a familiar couplet. For the life of me I cannot see that you owe her any duty. She has cast you adrift that her new husband may live upon her fortune, which should be yours, too. Do you mean to tell me that you love her as well as you did in the past?"

"Perhaps I love her more, because I pity her so sincerely. I am afraid she will have a very bitter awakening."

"She ought to suffer!" coldly. "She had no thought for or pity on you."

"Poor mamma," she was never strong-minded, and Mr. Congreve had fascinated her completely. I never heard him speak an angry word to her, but none the less do I believe he never loved her, but married her to serve his own ends."

"Of course, and she should have been wise enough to see what was so palpable to her daughter. For my own part, I find her equally guilty of cruelty to you as ever Congreve was."

"You do not know mamma. She is kindness itself," the girl says, loyally. "I hope one day, when all things are pleasant, you will meet her. You will judge her more kindly then."

Hector looks incredulous.

"My opinions, once formed, rarely change, and I know between myself and the Congreves there could never be even the semblance of friendship. There, say no more on the subject; it is not a pleasant one." And, by way of changing it, he adds, "Will you think me too inquisitive if I ask, Were you really christened Betty?"

"Not at all. Eleanor is Eleanor Maude. I am plain Betty, after my godmother. She was a spinster of property, all of which she was fond of declaring should be mine at her decease. I was quite an important personage until my tenth birthday; after that the glory departed from Ichabod. She wore a wig, surmounted by a cap, and I, with a praise-worthy thirst after knowledge, longed to see how she looked without it. On my birthday it was usual to give a dinner party, from which, I need not say, I was excluded. On this particular anniversary the sense of my wrongs was too great for me, and I hid myself behind some curtains, armed with a fishing-rod, line and hook. I was just immediately behind my godmother, and when dessert was brought in I threw out my line. The hook became fixed in the cap, and the wig came off with the cap. She looked so comical! and oh, what a scene followed! Godmother rose in a fury, declaring she would not stay another hour in a house where she had been so grossly insulted, and, rushing off to her room, packed her belongings and went. Of course, I was discovered, and mother, declaring with tears I was the most troublesome girl on earth, sent me to bed, minus the whipping I deserved. Three months later godmother died, bequeathing all her fortune to various charities—and that is how I made myself a pauper."

Hector laughs.

"You have been true to your old character, it seems. I know I have found you troublesome to the last degree. Don't scowl in that fashion—and here is home. To-morrow I shall be waiting for you at the gates at three precisely. If you do not keep the appointment punctually you will find me gone. That sounds awfully rude, I know, but it will not do at the commencement of our friendship to allow you the whip hand of me. You would quickly be my tyrant. Good-bye, Miss Betty. Perhaps it was all for the best you lost that fortune."

"Perhaps, but I doubt it. I love money for the sake of the pretty things it can command. Good-bye, Dr. Wharton," and she flits up the trim drive with a softer look in her eyes than ever mortal saw there before.

In the days immediately following she keeps her appointments with her new friend with conscientious punctuality, quite regardless of Mrs. Fyson's somewhat unpleasant remarks.

A new element has entered her life, a new sense of joy floods all her being. This friendship is so pleasant, so altogether novel an experience; and not even to herself does she acknowledge the truth that Hector is something nearer and dearer than a mere friend.

Every other day Mrs. Fyson insists upon a visit from her doctor. Her health demands constant attention, she says, and no one understands her so well as Hector Wharton—rather

no one else dare speak so plainly to her—and she has sense enough to appreciate his honesty.

Then at the close of each visit he is rewarded by a brief interview with Betty, which amply repays him for the irritation he suffers through his eccentric patient.

Usually, the girl meets him with a very bright face; but one morning she looks so pale and grave that he is troubled for her.

Opening the door of a room leading from the hall, he says, in authoritative tones—

"Come in here."

And like a child she obeys. She is beginning to know his will is stronger than hers.

"Now, tell me what is the matter? Something has happened since yesterday."

"Yes. I have heard from mamma, and she does not write very happily. I—I hoped to see her soon; but Mr. Congreve has decided to go to Germany, and they left England this morning."

Hector's face hardens; for the sake of this girl he loathes and despises her mother.

"She is only reaping the harvest she sowed. She has no ground for complaint," he says harshly. Then seeing the reproach on Betty's sad face, he adds quickly, "There, I am a brute to add to your trouble, child. Try to forgive me; and, Betty, you shall not worry yourself over what may be pure fancy, after all. Your mother may have meant no hint of sorrow, only you so distrust Congreve. You are always looking for evil news of him. Poor little girl! poor little girl!" and then, one hand, strong, firm, and gentle, steals over her pretty bowed head, and all her heart stands still with a sudden rapture that is not without its element of pain.

"Dear," the low, grave voice goes on, "you are not alone whilst you will have my friendship and allow my care. Betty, do you think you can trust me?"

"Yes," she answers, hardly above her breath, "I know that I can."

"And you will bring all your troubles to me? You promise me so much."

"I would not like to burden you with them," she says, tremulously. "You have been so kind to me already. You have helped me so often and so much."

"It has been a pleasure to me to know I was some use to you."

How fast his breath comes, what a light there is in his eyes! only Betty does not see it, her own not daring to meet his.

"I have been very happy of late, child, so happy that I have sometimes doubted if my bliss could last. Betty, don't you know? Don't you guess?"

"What?" whispers Betty; and then a step is heard outside, and Hector has only time to catch her to him, to kiss her sweet, coy lips once, and then to snatch up his hat and disappear through the doorway as the solemn butler enters.

Betty flies to her own room, pale with joy. What has come to her? Why is her heart so madly jubilant? What is this new, great emotion which transforms her whole life, and fills her whole soul?

Ah! Hector's kiss has told her all the truth; and sinking on her knees, she sob—

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! he loves me! Oh! dear Heaven! make me worthy of my love!"

CHAPTER VI.

It is a very blushing, shame-faced Betty that joins Hector that afternoon at the gate. She cannot lift her eyes to those eager ones bent upon her. She does not even know what words she says in answer to his greeting.

She is only conscious that she loves him, and will love him until she dies. She only feels that on all this fair earth there is no girl so lucky as she.

She forgets all the vows she made in the time which seems so far-back now, when she boldly declared not the best man in Christendom could persuade her to change her state until she had passed her third decade.

In almost utter silence they walk side by side, until the pleasant low-lying meadows are reached, and there is no one to see them, or hear their happy, foolish speech.

"Betty," says Hector, drawing her hand within his arm, "are you very angry with me for my boldness? Will you find it very hard to forgive me, that I kissed you without so much as saying, 'with your leave'?"

And, then, as she maintains a tremulous silence, he takes both her hands in his, and having her wholly at his mercy, looks un-restrainedly into her blushing face.

What he reads there must satisfy even him, for the next moment she is in his arms, clasped close to his breast, and he is raining kisses down upon the soft cheeks and sweet lips.

"Darling, darling," he says, in a passionate voice, "you do love me!" and she, with one arm about his neck, sighs back—

"I love you! Oh, yes, I love you!" and would hide her happy face from him if he would but permit.

"How much?" he demands. "How dear am I to you, sweetheart?"

"How can I tell? Can one measure the heart's affections? Oh, Hector! Oh, Hector, I wish I did not love you so dearly, for now to lose you would mean death!"

"And only by death can you lose me, or free yourself of your bonds. Betty, I think I have loved you always since I saw you first!"

"And I you," she answers, softly, "although I did not then understand myself, or why you, a stranger, should make so great an impression upon my mind."

"You have not kissed me yet," is his next remark. "You must do so now."

"I—I think not! I do not see the necessity!" with returning impudence.

"But I do, and my will is law! Betty, don't prove contumacious at the outset. You have got to wear your yoke gracefully."

"I'm sure I never shall!" with more than a touch of sauciness. "I never was meek or obedient. Eleanor monopolised all the virtues, and I have the vices."

"I can quite believe you; but, Betty, I am a determined fellow, and I shall hold you so—like this—until you do obey me. Why not surrender at discretion?"

And, then, partly because she loves him so dearly, partly because she likes his masterful way, she lifts her mouth to his, and kisses him once.

"Darling! darling! when will you come to me! The house is ready for the bride; there is no reason for delay. When will you marry me?"

"It is for you to say," she answers, in a very low voice.

"Let me see, this is September. We will be married in December, for, of course, you must give Mrs. Fyson timely notice. Oh, Betty, what a lucky fellow I am!"

"I hope you will always believe so," she retorts, with a flash of her old spirit. "Indeed, I think your reward exceeds your merits!"

"You conceited little woman! What an idea you have of your own importance! Betty, I'm afraid we shall quarrel awfully."

"I'm quite sure we shall," promptly, "because you are so masterful, and I have a will of my own. If you would prefer a meek Griselda there is time to draw back yet."

"I shall not do that, out of consideration for you. My desertion would mean death to you, you know," he says, teasingly; "and after all, I don't think a Griselda would find me a pleasant companion. I should quarrel with her because of her meekness."

"You seem a very amiable character on the whole," Betty retorts, impudently. "I think I have been just a wee bit too precipitate in undertaking the management of you (she is so happy that all the natural gaiety of her disposition rises to the surface), but I refuse to be frightened by the prospect before me!" Then she adds, more gravely, "I wonder what mamma will say?"

"Her opinion matters very little!" Hector answers, with a slight frown.

"Oh, but it does! She is my own mother, and lately, just lately, I have thought by the tone of her letters that she is in some great trouble."

"Don't speak of her now!" impatiently. "Let this one hour be all our own," and he has his way, so that the golden moments are filled with lovers' converse—foolish, no doubt, but none the less earnest and blissful to these two so newly betrothed.

Mrs. Fyson is very angry when the news is broken to her.

"You are the only companion I ever had who in any way realised her duties, and my extreme need of unremitting attentions—and just as I am used to you, you propose leaving me. In my state of health I deserve more consideration. I really cannot part with you so soon, Miss Grath, and so I shall tell Dr. Wharton. Oh, my poor nerves! Give me my smelling salts, and pass the sal volatile. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am a living martyr!" and throughout the day she makes her mean, and only for her great happiness Betty could not have endured her whimperings and stupid reproaches.

In the morning Hector comes, and Mrs. Fyson, pouncing upon him, says:

"This is an ill-advised step of yours, Dr. Wharton. Miss Grath is a mere child yet, and you a man well past thirty!"

"The matter, madam, rests entirely between ourselves. If Miss Grath is satisfied, no one beside has any cause for complaint."

"But, my dear sir, a man of your position and fame could marry where he pleased, and Miss Betty Grath is a penniless nobody, who cannot assist you socially."

"It will be my pleasure to win distinction for her," he answers, calmly, and then the real reason of her objection to the betrothal transpires.

"Miss Grath had no right to form such an alliance without first consulting me! Am I never to be considered? She suits me as well as any thoughtless girl could, and I object to losing her so quickly. I say that it is her duty to remain with me for six months longer, instead of which she proposes leaving in three. I shall not be able to appoint her successor in so short a time. I am not like an ordinary person."

"You must certainly are not, madam!" grimly; "but I consider three months a sufficient period in which to reconcile yourself to Miss Grath's resignation. At all events, I do not intend to wait longer for my wife!"

"I shall dispute her salary!" says the invalid, irately, and a hot flush rushes to the doctor's brow.

"Of course, madam, if you choose to act dishonourably, no one can prevent you; but in that case there is no necessity for Miss Grath to remain with you longer. It will be a little inconvenient for her, as I have no relative with whom I could place her, but our marriage can be consummated with very little delay."

Then Mrs. Fyson begins to sob, and lament her lonely condition, her terrible health, and finally lies prone upon her couch in an apparent swoon. Hector rings for her maid.

"Bring me a bowl of water," he says, quietly; and the girl obeying, he applies it with such a liberal hand that the invalid starts up with a sudden cry—

"That will do—you are drowning me!"

"Your mistress is better now. I will leave her in your care!" Hector says, quietly, and goes down to his little sweetheart with a shy smile in his eyes. "I'll venture to say she won't faint in my presence again," he says, after concluding his story; "and see here, Betty, you are not to submit to any impertinence from her. I won't have it. You are my property now!"

In the days that follow Betty has much that is unpleasant to endure, but her love sustains her, and to Hector she makes no complaints.

The three months are fleeting by, and soon her wedding-day will come. The thought that she will belong wholly then to her lover makes her strong to bear all that otherwise must have irked her.

She has written to her mother, informing her of her engagement, but no answer has reached her, and, secretly, the girl is very anxious concerning her. This, however, she does not confide to Hector. It is the one thing in which they have not perfect sympathy.

Towards the end of the second month Hector comes hurriedly into the house.

"Betty, it is too bad, but I must leave you. I have received a telegram from Lord Daisley, begging me to go to Ayrshire at once, as his only child is down with fever, and he wants me to watch the case. I can't very well refuse. If I save the lad my fortune is made, and for your sake I am ambitious. Dr. Ingle will see after my patients here; and for the rest, my dear, I will write you often. Now, wish me good-bye! I have not a moment to lose if I would catch the next train northwards."

"Good-bye," says the girl, "I shall miss you cruelly, but, of course, you ought to go. You won't forget to write me often. Ayrshire is so far away, and if harm comes to you I—I do not know how I should bear my life!"

"What harm could come to me, darling! You must not be anxious, and yet it is good to know you love me so well. Good-bye! One more kiss! Good-bye! In a little while we shall need to say that word no more!"

The place seems very dull without him, and Betty, who has always declared she hated sentiment, is much inclined to moan about the house, only her pride forbids this; and then, too, Mrs. Fyson is doubly exigent now that Dr. Wharton is gone.

But the arrival of his first letter makes Betty brave to bear anything, and the same post brings her news from Rhodesia.

Eleanor is well and happy, and Dick, who has had another stroke of luck, forwards a cheque to cover Betty's passage out and her mother, too, supposing the latter is not happy in her fresh matrimonial venture.

"I will answer both to-night," the girl thinks, as she walks down the drive, "but what am I to do with Dick's money? I have no need of it. I wonder if I might give it all to mother, only then Price Congreve would have the spending of it. I wish Hector were here to advise me."

The sound of an opening gate makes her look quickly up, and she sees a woman coming towards her—a woman in worn raiment, with a white, haggard face, and threads of grey darning the gold of her hair—a weary, travel-stained, helpless creature, as unlike her mother as it is possible to conceive, and yet in one swift glance Betty knows it is her mother, and runs with outstretched hands to meet her.

But the poor creature falls weeping at her feet, moaning out—

"Do not harden your heart against me. Oh, my child! Oh, my child! I am rightly punished for my sin against you!"

And Betty, stooping, lifts her in her strong young arms.

"Not there, mother, not as a suppliant, but here in my arms, here as a welcome and beloved one. Oh, why should you kneel to me—me, your child! Darling, you must tell me nothing now. Wait until you have eaten and slept," and all the while she is kissing the pale, aged face, and fondling the faded hair with the softest, most loving hands. "Cry, if it will ease your heart! Cry, oh poor little mother! dear little mother! We will never be parted again!"

And the weary, sobbing, wretched woman clings to her as if her very touch brought comfort and support. And all the while Betty's mind is racked with the thought:

"Where can I take her?"

She knows well enough Mrs. Fyson will not accord the wanderer a shelter. She is not a generous woman, and Betty has offended her. Then, like an inspiration, comes the thought

of Lizzie, the pleasant housemaid, whose people live in the village; and, leading poor Mrs. Congreve to a seat, she bids her wait for her return.

She is not long gone, and her face wears a relieved look as she joins her mother.

"Come, dear!" she says, with infinite gentleness, "I have obtained nice lodgings for you. We will go to them at once. It is only a short walk, and I can see you very often!"

And so, with an arm about the other's waist (for she is very weak and feeble) she leads her to Lizzie's home.

Lizzie's mother is a prudent woman, and asks no questions, so that her lodger is quickly installed in the one spare room, and Betty is listening to her sad story—it is sad, indeed.

From the time they left England Price Congreve had neglected and ill-treated her. His luck at cards, too, had been terrible, and he vented his rage on the unfortunate woman he had married.

He squandered her money, raised all he could upon her annuity, which he had fancied was treble the amount it really represented; and, finding she was a burden rather than a help to him, had coarsely told her to return home to the friends who were too proud to acknowledge his existence; and when she prayed with bitter tears and sobs that he would not send her away he struck her, and laughed, as he told her, that she had never any right to his name, he being already a married man when they met.

But for the kindness of the English Consul at Berlin, where they then were, the poor little woman could never have reached home! "And now," she says, in mournful conclusion, "I cannot stay where I am known. The shame of it all will kill me! I cannot meet my old friends, or return to the old haunts. Oh, Betty! oh, Betty! if I could but have seen with your eyes; but I was always a foolish body, though I thought myself so wise!"

And then Betty tells her of her engagement, for it seems her letter never reached her mother; shows her, too, the kindly lines Eleanor has written, and the generous gift Dick has sent.

"And what are we to do with it dear, I don't know," she says, "for your home, of course, will be with me."

It is late when she reaches Providence Villa, her mother being loth to let her go, and there is no chance of replying to Hector until midnight, when she is safe in her room.

Then she writes a long and tender letter, begging her lover for her sake to give her mother shelter, dwelling much upon her sufferings and privations, and ending by a passionate assertion that come what will she will never forsake the woman who gave her birth; and she falls asleep, confident that Hector will welcome her gladly.

Alas! alas! Hector's heart is yet hot against her mother, and he replies that he will never extend the hand of friendship to one who could treat his darling as she had done. The best and wisest thing Mrs. Congreve can do is to join her daughter at Natal.

CHAPTER VII.

Not a word does Betty say of this letter to her mother. Surely she has suffered enough already. Why should she add to her sorrows? So the girl bears herself bravely before the poor, weak woman, who clings to her as though their positions were reversed, and she the child.

"Oh," she says, tearfully, "I wish you had never met Dr. Wharton, then we could have gone to Rhodesia together. There, no one knows my story here. I dare not go abroad, lest I shall meet old friends or acquaintances. I do not think I am strong enough to bear their scorn."

"No one will blame you, mother, darling," the daughter says tenderly, and then she goes away to write her pitiful appeal to Hector.

"My darling," she says, "not even for your

sake can I desert my mother. She is ill, unhappy, alone. She has no one to comfort her save me. Oh, surely, surely! Hector, you who have been so good and generous to me, will not deny me the privilege of sheltering my mother. For myself I would ask nothing, but for her I forget my pride and turn suppliant. Ah, dear, if your love will not stand this first test, I give you back every promise you have made. You are absolutely free. A bad daughter will not make a good wife. Hector, my fate is in your hands; deal with me as you will. Be your decision ever so hard, I shall not reproach you. But, oh! for our love's sake, do not leave me long in suspense. I shall wait a week for your reply; and if I do not receive it at the close of the seven days I shall know that all is over between us, and shall leave for Africa. You need not write farewell. I could not bear it. Leave me at least some chance of forgetfulness. Oh, no! no! I never shall forget you, my Hector, my first, last love! Heaven have you in its keeping is the prayer of your poor little "Betty."

With what sick anxiety she waits the arrival of every post how shall I tell! With what a beating heart she steals to the gates to watch the slow-moving postman; and when he passes by without delivering any least line from Hector, what an agonised sigh breaks from her lips!

Her grief is all the more cruel that she cannot weep—tears are never easy with Betty.

And the seventh day passes; the last post is in, but there is no letter for her. Like a wild thing she rushes to her room, and casting herself face downwards on the floor, writhes, and twists and moans, in the agony that can find no natural vent.

Poor little Betty! How long she lies there she does not know, and she is altogether regardless of Mrs. Fyson's repeated ringing.

When at last a maid knocks loudly at the door, she springs to her feet, her face blanched and her hands clenched in the folds of her skirt. Very fierce she looks, and the girl starts back, aghast at her altered appearance.

"Oh, miss! You are ill? And mistress sent me to say would you come down?"

"I can't, Alice! I can't! I—I—oh, my head, my head!" and she reels against the wall.

But for the girl's friendly support she must have fallen. For a moment she rests in the strong, kindly arms, then lifting herself erect, says,

"You are very good to me! I will thank you better when I am more myself. I am well enough now to go down. No, no, you need make no excuse for me!" and so she quits the room hastily, and joins Mrs. Fyson.

"I rang for you six times!" the invalid says petulantly. "Why did you not come? You presume too much on your position as Dr. Wharton's fiancée."

"I am sorry for my fault," the girl retorts with miserable defiance; "and you shall not suffer a repetition of it. I leave here on Friday en route for Rhodesia. I must ask you to release me at an earlier date than the one arranged. Of course I forfeit my salary."

"Rhodesia!" says the invalid shrilly. "Girl, are you mad? Why, in a week or two at most you are to be married!"

"You mistake, madam; I have released Dr. Wharton! I have changed my mind! I have been thinking of these things for days, and have written to the shipping office inquiring for berths, terms, etc. I find I can go on Friday."

"You are a fool!" is the polite response. "You'll never get such another chance of settling, and I think Dr. Wharton is well rid of you!"

"Thank you, madam; you are nothing if not kind!" bitterly; and, with a low, half-mocking courtesy, Betty passes out and up to her room.

The good ship *Etruria* has left port two days, and is well on her way, when a Highland girl rushes out of her cottage in search of her mother.

"Come home, mither, the mon has spoken, and it is very foolish questions he's asking! I canna soothe him; it's you maybe can do that!" and the elder woman hastens to follow her to the little two-roomed house they call home.

In the front room is a bed, and on that bed lies a man with bandaged head, tossing to and fro in the weariness of fever—he is Hector Wharton!

"How long have I been there?" he asks, eagerly, as the woman bends over him.

"Nigh on ten days, sir, and it's bad ye ha' been. At times we didna think ye'd pull through. Dear, dear, it is good indeed to hear ye speak like a sound man—ye've been clean daft all the while."

"Has anyone been here asking for me?" is the next question.

"La! na, sir; who should come a speering? It's vera few folks we see up here. But I misdoubt me, ye'll be makin' your friends anxious. Here's Peggy here would ha' walked miles to tell 'em about ye—but, lor', we didna know ye fra' Adam. I was maist scared when I found ye a lyin' at t' bottom of t' cliff, and it is hard work we had, Peggy and me, to get ye up here."

"You have been most good to me, and I will do my best to repay you for your services—for your kindness I never can. How far am I from Daisley Castle?"

"A matter o' eight miles, sir. Is it a message you would send there? My Peggy 'll tak' it wi' pleasure. Sakes! if only we'd kenned ye come fra' there, hoo much worry we might ha' saved! Peggy, lass, ye go on to Daisley, and tell his lordship, Mr.—Mr.—"

"I am Hector Wharton."

"Mr. Wharton is lyin' here wi' a crackit skull; it's early yet, and ye'll get there betimes, and never fear but they'll pit ye up for the night. Now, sir, ye just lie still whilst I get ye your parritch!"

It is days before Hector Wharton can be moved to Daisley, and Lord Daisley visits him frequently, being grateful for the skill which has spared his child to him, counting Hector amongst his dearest friends. From the doctor's own narrative it transpires that, being restless, he had risen early and taken a long walk (to tell the truth, he had been fighting with his prejudices against Mrs. Congreve, or rather Mrs. Grath), and did not notice how great a distance he was placing between himself and the Castle.

He wanted to please Betty, but it was hard to conquer himself; and just when he had achieved the victory, a grey mist swooped down over mountain and glen in the peculiar and favourite fashion of mists in Scotland, and in some wise he lost his footing, and fell into a fairly deep gully. But for good Mrs. McBride he must have perished, and Betty never would have known the truth.

On the first day of his return to Daisley his host hands him his letters, and naturally he selects Betty's from the pile. What must she think, poor little girl, of his long silence? Oh! how he wishes his last had been kinder.

"But she will never doubt me," he thinks. "She is too true herself—Heaven bless her! Well, I will make amends as far as lies in my power. Betty is right to stick to her mother," and then he tears open the envelope and reads the poor child's farewell.

He goes at once to his host.

"I must leave here to-day," he says, in a broken voice. "I—I—oh, great Heaven! I am afraid all my life is spoiled through this, my wretched accident, and what a brute she must think me!" Then, being very weak and excited, he gives one strange, awful cry, and falls to the ground.

It is days before he can get about again, and all the while he is eating his heart out with anxiety concerning Betty—his poor, brave, unselfish Betty—who has sacrificed her love

to her duty, and gone broken-hearted to a distant and strange land.

Betty Grath stands at the gate, opening into her brother's garden. The house is removed from all others, and the solitude is pleasant to the pale English girl. Ah! what a changed Betty it is, who so frequently assures her mother she has given up nothing for her sake—that she and her lover are better—oh! far better apart!

She is not without lovers here, but to them all she says: "I shall never marry," and if they find a fault or flaw in her character, it is that she is too cold.

This morning as she stands under the brilliant sky hosts of memories come crowding upon her, until with a little sob she says:

"Ah, dear! it was so small a boon I asked, and I loved you so well. I would have given my life for you; but you would not grant my first and last request. Perhaps it is all for the best; but oh, my heart! I could give ten, twenty, ay! all the years of my life to see him once again!"

And then she sees a figure approaching—such a familiar figure that her heart stands still, and in sudden anguish she says:

"Ah, dear Heaven! he is dead! and this is but his shadow I see!"

Then all in a moment she is caught in a pair of strong arms. There is nothing shadowy about that embrace, and her eyes are searching the pale, worn face, her ears drinking in the music of his words.

"I came as soon as I could, Betty. I never got your letter until days after you sailed. Oh, my darling! oh, my darling! what must you have thought and believed? My last letter to you was so brutal, will you forgive, can you forgive? or will you send me back to England hopeless and despairing?"

"Hector," she sobs, "oh! Hector, I have been so unhappy! I never guessed, dear heart, that you were ignorant of my plans. I was too hasty, and is it true you love me still—that you have come all this weary way to find me out?"

"It is true, Betty. Life without you is not worth living. I love you with all my heart, with all my strength. My little wife, my darling wife!"

With a gesture of passionate abandonment she draws his head down upon her breast.

"Pray with me Hector that I may be worthy of your love. Oh, my darling, how good Heaven is!"

A month later Dr. Wharton takes his bride back to England, but Mrs. Grath remains in the country where her sad story is not known.

[THE END.]

MAXIMS FOR THE STRENUOUS AGE.

When in doubt take a bath.

Half the battle is won if you are well dressed.

Man is at a disadvantage after he is forty-five years of age, but the woman of fifty may still shine in the chorus.

They say words are empty, but the man who can talk most glibly has the least cause to look upon life as a hollow mockery.

When others are inclined to sneer at our work we may always comfort ourselves with the thought that perhaps they are jealous.

AN UP-TO-DATE WEDDING

The wedding swell was going well,

A splendid sight to see;

Out rang a voice, clear as a bell:

"This wedding cannot be!"

The organ stopped, the bride had dropped

Back fainting 'mid the palms;

So when in rage the bridegroom hopped

The speaker felt some qualms.

"I only said you should not wed!"

He spoke with covert laugh—

"Until three minutes shall have sped,

When I start the biograph!"

Society

THE QUEEN has not ordered a new crown for the Coronation, and there is no certainty that she will do so, although numberless lovely designs have been submitted to her, and she has to live up to her world-wide reputation of being the most beautiful and best dressed woman that this century has seen. She clearly does not dread rivalry, for she has chosen the Duchess of Sutherland to be one of the four handsome duchesses who will hold a canopy above her head, the others being the Duchess of Marlborough, the Duchess of Montrose, and the Duchess of Portland. All are having new tiaras for the grand occasion. In fact, most of the peeresses are being extravagant in this respect. The Duchess of Devonshire will wear a glorious new crown, with big pendant pear-shaped brilliants, and Lady Alice Stanley's new crown, which is something of the same shape, has small drop brilliants, quite round.

THERE are rumours that the King will bestow the Garter this year not only upon the King of Spain, but upon the Emperor of Japan also, the latter being one of the few monarchs in civilised countries who does not possess the Order. This recognition on the part of His Majesty of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would certainly be popular here, and would be highly appreciated in Japan, where they esteem decorations of this kind more, if possible, than we do. By leaving his country to attend the Coronation the Crown Prince breaks the traditions of Japan since the dawn of its history, and this may be accounted the final severance of the Empire from its traditional exclusiveness.

LONDON will entertain many distinguished foreigners and Colonists in June, but King Lewanika, the paramount chief of Barotseland, will surely be the strangest of them all. He is described as being an enlightened potentate, with "quite English ideas." One of his ideas hardly seems so English as it might be. He has a great State barge which is rowed by eighty rowers, all men of rank. The Prime Minister himself has to ply the oar as one of the eighty. This is, no doubt, most English and athletic, but the costume of these noble bargemen is not yet adopted on the Thames.

ALTHOUGH the Archduchess Elizabeth renounced her rights to the Austrian crown when she married Prince Otto Windischgrätz she still receives most of the honours due to her royal birth. When visiting the King and Queen of Greece at Athens the other day, the young couple were officially met by the Austrian Consul and the authorities, and were cordially saluted by the people gathered in the streets.

PRINCE OTTO WINDISCHGRAETZ by no means ranks with the ordinary Austrian nobility, and members of the family have before now contracted marriages with Royalties. Prince Hugo married a niece of the Emperor William I. His daughter became the wife of her cousin, Duke Paul Frederick, of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, and when King Alfonso XII. was looking for a wife, one of the Princesses of Windischgrätz was suggested as a suitable consort. The Windischgrätzes were proud of their exalted position, and had a coinage of their own, stamped with the arrogant motto, "Below the rank of Baron, no man counts." The father of Prince Otto is a well-known numismatist.

LORD ROBERTS, who has been interesting himself in the case of William Riches, a Norfolk Crimean veteran, who was spending his old age in Aylsham workhouse, has now made arrangements that will ensure him spending the rest of his days in comfort. In a letter to the Local Government Poor-Law Inspector for the Eastern Counties, who brought the case under the notice of the Commander-in-Chief, the private secretary to Lord Roberts writes: "I am desired by his lordship to inform you that arrangements have been made for his old soldier to be admitted as an in-patient of Chelsea Hospital."

OUR FAULTS IN OTHERS.

Many people have a genius for seeing the faults of others, but there is one peculiarity about this faculty which will be an interesting study for the psychologist; it is the tendency to criticise most sharply those faults in others which are most prominent in ourselves. In other words, that which excites our greatest antagonism is the duplication of our own traits. It would be amusing, if it were not disturbing and pathetic, to hear people criticise mercilessly traits in others which everybody recognises as being the special possession of the critics themselves. It is pathetic because it shows how little we know about ourselves, and it is disturbing because it suggests to the listener that he may be doing precisely the same thing. In all probability he is. So little do we know ourselves, as a rule, that when we see parts of ourselves in others we detect them. If we recognised them as being in a sense our own possessions, we might not like them any better, but we should surely sympathise with their possessors. If there is any common experience which ought to draw us together, it is identity of struggle and temptation. We ought to stand shoulder to shoulder with those who are fighting the same fight which we are fighting, and who find in themselves the same tendencies to evil or to weakness; and yet these are the very people from whom, as a rule, we withdraw ourselves most entirely, and upon whose shoulders the lash of our criticism falls most mercilessly. It is a good plan when one finds he is specially irritated by certain traits in another to study himself closely, in order to discover whether those very traits are not his own characteristics. It generally happens that a trait which is specially irritating in another is the very trait which everybody finds in us. As Cowper so sagely sung:—

Their own defects, invisible to them,
Seen in another, they at once condemn;
And though self-idolised in every case,
Hate their own likeness in another's face.

CARE OF THE MOUTH.

IT has been said that the visible seat of emotion is the mouth. Emerson says: "Of all the organs of sense, the mouth admits, I believe, of the greatest beauty and greatest deformity." The beauty of this important feature of woman depends more upon herself than any other. The contour of the lips is changed with every passing thought, they being a nucleus of nerves and surrounded by very many muscles, and of all the features, they are the most susceptible of action, and the most direct indices of the feelings.

Many standards have been established for the really beautiful mouth, but the only one accepted as perfect is the mouth that is neither large nor small, with a graceful, firm outline. Beautiful lips are neither thick nor thin, compressed nor weak.

But there are other requisites to a perfect mouth. There must be well-shaped teeth, even and white; and pink gums. The teeth need constant care and should be brushed after each meal. They should never be picked with pointed instruments, but unpleasant accumulations should be removed with dentists' silk.

The best indication of a state of healthiness is fresh-coloured lips and a pure breath—another sure proof that beauty depends almost solely upon perfect health.

It is very necessary that great care be exercised in putting rouges and pomades on the lips to heighten their colour, or relieve a chapped condition. The habit of constantly wetting the lips with the tongue is malicious, and should be religiously avoided. It is usually the pale anæmic woman who suffers from pale, roughened, hardened lips, and in a fit of desperation injurious pomades are often resorted to for a remedy. Very few healing salves are more effective than a bit of mutton tallow, but if something more æsthetic is desired, a lotion composed of equal parts of glycerine and rosewater will be found very effective.

Gleanings

A YOUNG girl is the nearest approach to an angel that we have—and the most exasperating.

It has never yet been decided whether a woman is happier when happy or when miserable.

The authorities of Uelzen, Prussia, have passed an ordinance requiring all husbands to be home by eleven o'clock at night, or pay a fine of 10s.

The Sunday School Union's campaign against cigarette smoking by boys has so far resulted in 5,000 pledges to abstain from tobacco till the age of twenty-one.

AN KILCHENOW, in Russian Bessarabia, lives an old lady who was born in 1792, when Catherine II. occupied the Russian Throne. The venerable dame, who was never married, lives quite alone, all her relatives having predeceased her.

NOVEL FIRE ALARM.—A Kansas fire brigade is possessed of a "buzzer" by way of a fire alarm. The curious thing about it is that it is blown by natural gas from the street main. It can be heard for several miles, and we presume it can be smelt for several furlongs.

THE BEARDED LIZARD.—The specimen of the bearded lizard, which is one of the latest additions to the reptile house at the Zoo, in common with the frilled variety, is chiefly noted for the expansive beard-like development of the skin immediately beneath the chin, which when the creature is excited can be erected like the sudden opening of an umbrella. A grotesque feature of the frilled lizard is the extraordinary power which it possesses of running along on its hind legs with a bold, swinging gait.

A SIXTH SENSE.—The actual possibility of a sixth sense in human beings was advanced with great plausibility by Dr. Javal at the meeting of the Paris Academy of Medicine. Dr. Javal is blind, and in the course of his speech he denied vigorously that Nature compensates blindness by increased sensibility of touch and hearing. Rather he considered that when a person was blind an extra development takes place of the sixth sense, which is latent in all persons. This sense, which has been called the sense of obstacles, acts by the perception of certain warm and indefinite vibrations. The seat of the sense is believed to be placed in the forehead.

DO FISHES SLEEP?—There does not appear to be any real scientific authority on the question as to whether fish sleep, though, from the hibernating habits of some species, it is reasonable to suppose that any fish might sleep. There have been numerous cases of gold fish frozen solid in the ice, and it is presumable that during the frozen period they must have been in a comatose state which could be properly called sleep. Fish in aquaria have been seen to rest for long periods without motion, save for that of the gills, though their eyes were open all the time. But as fish have no eyelids they cannot close their eyes in any circumstances.

THE SMALLEST KNOWN MICROBE.—The smallest microbe yet known is said to have been discovered by Mr. O. Voges, of Buenos Ayres. "It is much less than the influenza bacillus, and only just discernible when magnified about 1,500 times." The work of the smallest bacterium in this troubled world is to produce deadly abscesses, known in South America as mangones, in cattle, with this special characteristic—the hotter the climate the more fatal the infection. A further peculiarity is that if the abscess is opened in its early stages the disease is arrested and the animal saved. Minuteness of the germs of disease is no particular advantage to the victims; the influenza microbe makes up for its diminutiveness by overwhelming numbers.

AN INVISIBLE COLLABORATOR.—A Russian Spiritualistic journal has just started a novel feature in the shape of a column called "From the Other World." "This column," the editor says in his introductory notice, "will not be conducted by us, but our invisible collaborator. If any of our readers desire to receive a communication from a dead friend, he can write to the editor, and receive an answer from the other world."

COINS OF BUDDHA'S TIME.—An important discovery of silver coins is reported from Travancore, India. The coins, 306 in number, were found in an urn in a cutting, and were forwarded by the Government of India to Dr. Thurston, of the Madras Museum, who has identified most of the pieces as being certainly current in the time of Buddha, that is, in the sixth century before the Christian era, and probably even as far back as 1000 B.C.

PING-PONG PUNCH.—We already have Ping-pong babies, cigarettes, and a host of other Ping-pongisms. The latest arrival is Ping-pong punch. The ingredients consist of the juice of a lemon, a dash of bitters, a glass of apple cider, a fresh egg and a spoonful of powdered sugar. That is well shaken, poured into a tall glass and filled up with sparkling soda water. It has caught on immediately, but anything with a name like that would.

ELECTRIC LIGHT AND THE EYES.—A Russian specialist has decided that, contrary to the general opinion, electric light plays less havoc with the eyes than other forms of artificial light. He bases his deductions on the fact that disease and damage to the eye is proportioned to the frequency of the closure of the lids. He found that the lids close in a minute 6.8 times with candle light, 2.8 times with gas light, 2.2 times with sunlight, and 1.8 times with electric light.

AN UNIQUE WEDDING PRESENT.—An ingenious wedding present has been received by a French bride from one of her relatives, who is a geographer. The present is a silver bowl in the design of a terrestrial globe, the upper hemisphere forming the cover. The map of the earth has been elaborately engraved on the outside, and the route taken by the newly-wedded pair is indicated by a line of lapis-lazuli, the names of the towns at which a stay was made being inserted in enamel.

ANTS AND GUM ARABIC.—Investigations into the production of gum in German East Africa show that practically all secretions of gum in that country are provoked by ants. The ants perforate the bark of the acacia to gain admittance into the wood, where they lay their eggs in the excavations, which are sometimes of considerable extent, each perforation being marked with a globule of gum. The ant that produces the gum makes no use of it; it is only an obstruction to her work, since it stops up the galleries she hollows out.

CHICAGO'S NEW TELEPHONES.—A new and novel system of telephone is shortly to be put into operation in Chicago. It is automatic, requiring no attendant at the central station, making its own connection with the required number by the subscriber putting his finger through the hole in a disc which contains ten numbers, and consecutively pulling the disc with the desired numbers towards the bottom. This system is known as the Strowger system and has been in operation in small towns in the Eastern States for two years. One mechanic can attend to 1,000 telephones.

THE HAIR AND THE EMOTIONS.—That premature greyness of the hair often follows upon mental worry and grief, and also upon severe illness, is, of course, a familiar fact. Byron's reference to the blanching of hair "in a single night" in the "Prisoner of Chillon" through "sudden fears," has been paralleled in actual life. On one occasion in India, a native's hair was seen to alter in colour as he was being led out to execution. There can be no reason to doubt the close relationship which exists between the nervous system and the hair in respect to the alteration of its pigment.

A NEW MEDICINE.—Dr. O'Sullivan-Bears communicates to the *Lancet* another striking testimony to Nature's forethought, a homely example of which we have in the juxtaposition of the nettle and dock-leaf. It appears that the red decoction of a newly-found cassia tree (leaves or bark) is an infallible remedy for that dread disease "blackwater fever," so fatal to European and native alike, and hitherto erroneously regarded as a mere complication of malaria, and ineffectually treated with tannin, quinine, or iron perchloride. He owed this discovery to native medicine men.

THE MILK QUESTION.—Dr. Andrew Wilson says there is no evidence that milk, boiled or sterilised, is deprived of nutrient qualities. Dr. W. B. Ranson has lately expressed views to this effect. The charge that boiled milk is apt to produce scurvy in infants, he suggests, is without foundation, and is due to the use of what he calls "proprietary dry food," which, in plain parlance, means the dry infants' foods so widely used. He concludes that there is no solid evidence to show that milk raised for ten minutes to a temperature of 233 degrees F. suffers any diminution of its nutrient qualities.

THE AGE OF MAN.—Professor Karl Pearson, in a note he contributes to a biological publication, shows from mummy statistics furnished by Professor Flinders Petrie that there has been a great increase in the expectation of life since the two thousand years which have elapsed from the Romano-Egyptian epoch. Out of one hundred modern English alive at ten years of age, thirty-nine survive to be sixty-eight, while not nine survived out of one hundred Romano-Egyptians. Yet not many centuries before that, and in a region not far removed, an Israelite, whose fathers had known Egypt, wrote that three score years and ten were the age of man.

SNOW AS A GERM KILLER.—Experiments have lately been made in Chicago for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent a covering of snow on the ground is effective in lessening the contamination of the atmosphere by germs. Shallow dishes containing the preparation used in making germ cultures were exposed to the air in ten different places for three minutes, when there was no snow on the ground. The average number of germ colonies in each dish, after allowing time for incubation, was 630. The experiment was repeated after a fall of snow equal to a quarter of an inch of rainfall, and the average number of germ colonies was found to be only sixty-six.

THE GERMS OF THE SEA.—The sea has its germs as the land has and as the air has, only the marine bacteria are comparatively scarce except near shore. It is, it seems, germs that produce that beautiful phenomenon, the phosphorescence of the sea which voyagers to often have an opportunity of admiring. The so-called phosphorescence is caused by photobacteria which prey upon and are dangerous to fish life as well as by a variety of low forms of animal life. The eerie light is in no way connected with the element phosphorus, as is very commonly supposed. The cause of the phenomenon is respiratory exchange or oxidation, an aerobic function. Sea phosphorescence is never witnessed in perfectly smooth water, while the brilliancy of the light when it is observed is always greatest upon the crests of the waves or where the water is in a violent state of agitation, as in the wake of a steamer. Its occurrence, therefore, is evidence of active oxidation. Could, again, the sea be sterilised phosphorescence would cease. The presence of highly combustible matter increases the light. A very simple experiment proves this. If the flesh of a fresh haddock or herring be placed in a 3 per cent. salt solution and kept at a low temperature (from 40° to 50° F.) the liquid will rapidly develop phosphorescence which becomes quite brilliant on adding a little glycerine or sugar, or what, in other words, is respirable material. It is curious that in marine life disease and death should be associated with luminous phenomena.

THE EYES OF THE PICTURE

By the Author of "For Silk Attire," etc., etc.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Violet Marsden, stung to the quick by the neglect of the man who calls himself her husband, and driven to desperation by his callous and inhuman treatment of her, in a fit of temporary madness would have made an end of her life by drowning. Seven years have gone by, and Violet Marsden, now known as Mrs. Herbert, has almost forgotten this unhappy episode. She is quite a favourite among certain artists, and as one of her "At Homes," Leigh Erlscourt is introduced to her. Mrs. Herbert recognises him as her preserver, and would like to tell him how she has blessed him a thousand times since that day. Leigh sees Mrs. Herbert frequently, and his friends and relations are curious of his interest in a woman whose past is shrouded in mystery. Mrs. Herbert visits Leigh's studio to look at a picture he is painting. It is that of the woman who would have destroyed herself for his timely aid, and it is with difficulty Mrs. Herbert controls herself at this critical moment. Mrs. Chaloner, who is the soul of propriety, hears of her brother's infatuation for this "unknown woman," and earnestly remonstrates with him on his folly, but all to no purpose. Leigh does not realise it yet but he has met his fate, and if it is folly he must pay the price. Violet tries to prevent Leigh speaking the word which she is all the time longing to hear. But such whole-hearted devotion cannot be suppressed, and it is when he has declared his passion that Violet tells him of the dark page in her history. Henceforth Leigh has but one object, to discover, and if possible secure punishment to the man who has brought so much sorrow into his dear one's short life.

CHAPTER XVII.—(continued.)

Greville was, on such an occasion, an admirable companion. He let his friend alone, and by the time they were out of the park and in the leafy shades of the Gardens, Erlscourt's vigorous brain had recovered itself.

"If you're not in a hurry, Greville," he said, "let us stop here a bit. I want to say something."

They threw themselves on the grass. Erlscourt began at once:

"You were surprised at my asking Venner to come with us. You don't know him much, do you?"

"Not much. As I told you, only by having been occasionally to King's."

"I want you to take me to King's."

"Leigh!" exclaimed Greville, "what the deuce are you after?"

"No harm," said the other, not moving his position. "At present my idea is to cultivate this Venner's acquaintance."

"But you—who hate these sort of clubs—you know it is nothing but the highest of high play."

"Gambling," put in Erlscourt. "I know—nevertheless I am going there—or anywhere else where I can meet Venner. You must ask no questions, Greville, and you must say not a word to anyone—not even Dora," and he could not resist a smile. "If I continue going, and you hear it said I am taking to play, going the high road to ruin and all that, don't contradict it. Run me down for once in your life. I suppose King's is not different from its kind. Any goose that can be plucked is welcome, member or not."

"Oh, yes," said Greville, pulling up grass rather viciously. "You're trying my friendship, old fellow."

"It's a better way to try it than some others," was the answer very gently given.

Greville flushed up.

"What do you mean?" he said, turning his face aside.

"I've had it in my mind often to say something to you," said Erlscourt, "only we've both been so busy that we've seen little of one another. You've been half inclined to be vexed with me sometimes, and—well, perhaps a little jealous—"

"Leigh!" said Greville, struck with remorse, laying his hand on Erlscourt's.

"Nay, hear me out. I am not blaming you—it is hard, but it isn't my fault that Dora is

so much in my care. I can't always avoid it without letting her think that I don't like to have her, and I could not do that. Don't let anything come between us, however slightly," said Erlscourt, with his earnest eyes, looking so straightly and frankly into Greville's. "If I were heart-free, could I for an hour, a minute, try to stand in your way?"

"Oh! Leigh, don't think I ever dreamt that; how can I explain it so as to make you understand what it really was—that I never loved you one whit the less—how angry I was with myself. You see you are free to come and go as you like; I am shut out; and I suppose that made me feel bitter sometimes—always against my will. You must forgive it."

"There can be no such word between you and me," said Erlscourt, and for a minute the two hands held one another silently.

"It is only Emmie's folly," Erlscourt resumed, after a minute or two, "that parts you two. One can see through her in an instant. The whole world might go crash if I were safe. I suppose I must be ill-constituted not to be grateful for so much affection, but I confess I am not. How can I be when it worries me on every side?"

"Do you mean," asked Greville, bluntly, "that she keeps me out of the way to give you a fair field?"

"Exactly. I believe Dora sees through the device too."

"But why?" began Greville, when some words Erlscourt had not long uttered came into his mind—"if I were heart-free," he had said.

"I thought that was nothing much," he said, in a low voice, more following out his train of thought than speaking to his friend, "at least, I was not sure."

"What was nothing much?"

"I knew you admired Violet Herbert, of course, as we all did, and I have often fancied there was something more," said Greville, not finding it easier to go on because Erlscourt remained so silent. "I see it all now."

But his face remained grave. He did not like it nor his share in bringing his friend and Violet Herbert together, and he was too honest to say he did.

Yet it hurt both that there was a difference between them. It was Erlscourt whose necessarily intenser pain forced him to break through the momentary barrier.

"Morton, don't think hardly of her," he said, "don't think me blinded because I love her. Someone has said that what we call the blindness of love is often only intuition. I know what some of you think of her, what some of you would say if you knew how dear she is to me; but you must not think it."

"My dear old fellow," said Greville, "I never did think any harm of her—never. I have often defended her, and I always liked her. It was you I thought of, not her. She can only be glad to have won such a heart as yours."

"And I am to weigh and measure and be a little doubtful whether the treasure is worth all I pay for it? That isn't your fashion, Greville. Don't misunderstand me—I understand you," and the soft voice changed to a still softer tone. "Well, I won't say your fears for me are unfounded—in one sense, I don't see my way very clearly, I never may—nor may the way be clear this side of eternity. But to love—to be loved—that will always be mine; that, not words between us can alter."

"I know," said Greville, and thought of Dora. "I am glad you have told me, Leigh."

"I wanted you to know. You will have no shadow of doubt about me, if you must needs have as yet about Dora. I cannot hold two

loves, nor leave one for another. And as to what I asked you—about King's, I mean—I will say so far as that it is in Violet's service I am acting—and I may want your help further. I will not ask if I may count on it—"

"Leigh, you know I would go to the end of the earth for you."

"Meanwhile," said the other, springing up. "I don't want you to go any further than my own door, and we have talked long enough. I won't thank you for those last words."

And yet the caressing hand he laid on Greville's shoulder seemed to mean something more than good fellowship.

Gilbert Venner put a very different interpretation on Erlscourt's evident desire not to let him drop. He thought his *ruse* had succeeded—that these geniuses were always to be caught through their vanity.

"And we shall see our high and mighty painter follow my lead like a spaniel," he said, triumphantly, to himself. "That was a chance coincidence. The girl looked like that once, curse her! I suppose that deceived me, but he said that he got the face from a model, and she'd never go for that—too deuced proud. She's either dead or married. So I've no fear of you, my handsome painter. You've no cause to be my enemy. Don't think I should care for you in that position. I've got an idea you could be ruthless enough for all those velvety eyes of yours."

CHAPTER XVIII.

The club familiarly called "King's" was anything but a shabby affair. Money had been put into it—how obtained it were best not to inquire, and certainly money was made out of it.

For, as its promoters had said, and justly, you cannot make money without spending money.

The place was handsomely got up, in a rather showy and gorgeous style, but that suited the taste of the bulk of the members.

The large card-room one particular night was, as usual, brilliant with light. There were a good many men gathered round the tables, not playing as if for relaxation, but with the absorption of men to whom play is the business in life.

They were a very mixed group, of various classes and various nationalities—not the best specimens of their different races either. George King was not present, but Venner, whom no one suspected to be more than a member like themselves, was seated at a small table playing vingt-et-un with three others. He was winning—he generally did; and looked satisfied in proportion as the other faces grew long. Of course wine was going about.

"I haven't seen Greville for some time," said one of the men, none other than the redoubtable Wilson of the Stock Exchange, who perhaps spent his money so lightly because it was got lightly. "He is your friend, Venner. What's become of him?"

"I half expect him to-night," said Venner. "I met him yesterday, and he said he might come in."

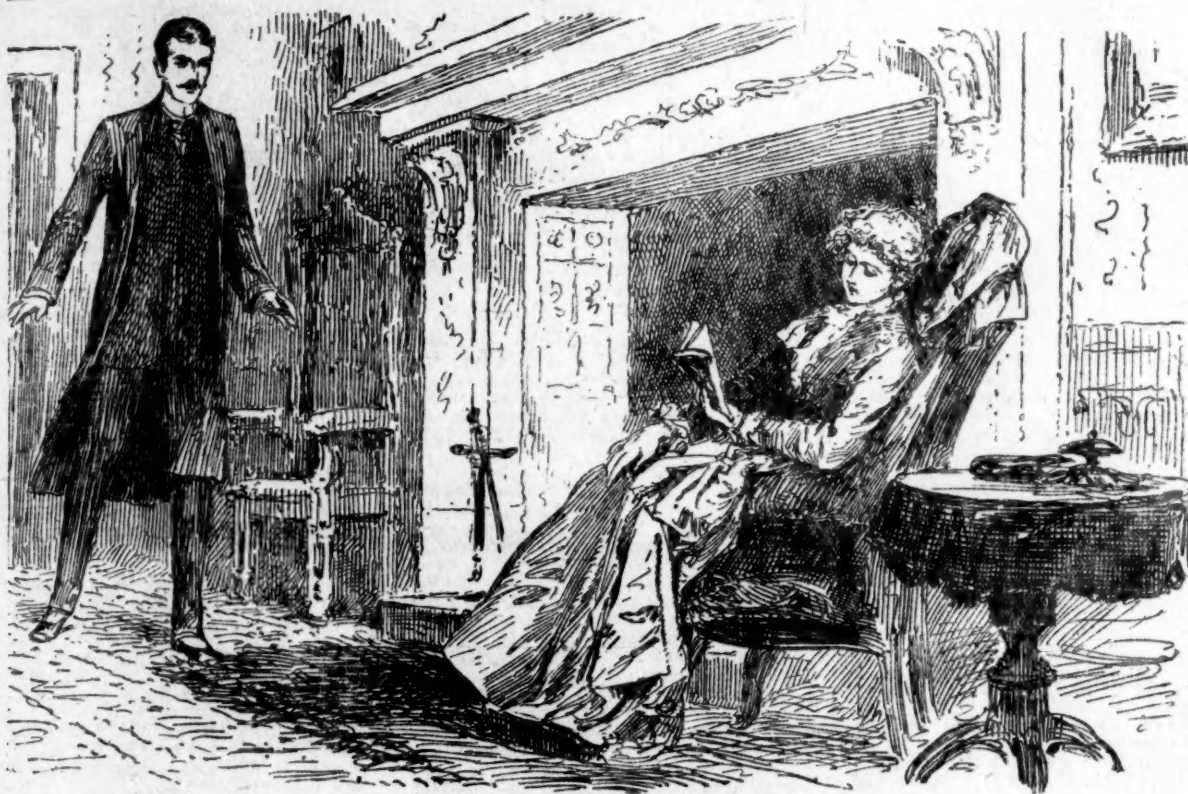
"There he is!" said a man at another table near, overhearing. "Who's that with him?"

Several looked up. Strangers were by no means scarce in that club, its rules being, as usual with its kind, very elastic.

Any member was at liberty to bring in friends when he liked, and no restriction was placed on their use of cards or billiard-tables. So that the appearance of another person with Morton Greville was no surprise in itself—it was a surprise to two or three to recognise in that person Leigh Erlscourt the painter.

Venner rose and went to meet the new comers.

"Very glad to see you both," said he, smiling, well-bred enough not to express his satisfaction. "I didn't know you were much of a player, Mr. Erlscourt?"



VIOLET MADE A PRETENCE OF BEING DEEPLY ABSORBED IN A BOOK.

Eriscourt had strung himself up to meet this man without any self-betrayal—to show neither by look nor manner, nor even by the absence of anything proper to the occasion, what he felt.

His talisman, now and always, was the thought of his darling. What have not men done under the spell of some loved name?

He gave his hand to Venner as he would to any ordinary acquaintance—perfectly easily, withdrawing it as usual.

"I am not much of a player," he said, "but Greville was telling me about the club, and I thought I should like to have a look at it."

"Which means," thought Venner, "that he likes to come where he thinks he's appreciated. It's a good thing to understand human foibles." Then aloud and laughing, "Don't lose too much money. We play rather high here."

"There's not much interest in low stakes," said Eriscourt. "Risk has its fascination."

"I'm afraid it has. Shall you play yet?" "Perhaps—; don't let me keep you from your play."

He moved away, following Greville, who sat down at a table, and called the attendant to bring a pack of cards.

Venner, although busy with his own game, managed to keep an eye on that table at which the two painters had been joined by some Frenchmen Greville had met at the club before.

He gathered that there was some discussion as to what the game should be. Finally, Nap was chosen—Nap that may be so innocent.

It wasn't very innocent at King's as a rule. In this case there seemed to be a good deal of money lost and won, and a good deal of talk and laughter.

Venner easily distinguished Eriscourt's soft tones amongst the others. His crisp, delicate accent contrasted curiously with the broken English, interlarded with provincial French, of the other two men, who, to Venner's vexation, happened not to be gentlemen.

They also happened to be inveterate gamblers, and were highly delighted at the unconcerned way in which the stranger consented to any stakes they proposed.

Greville on one occasion demurred, although he had been winning.

"It's awfully high!" said he.

"What does it matter?" said Eriscourt, opening his eyes, and throwing down more gold. "You are winning; it is for the losers to object."

"Oh, I don't mind," said Greville, "if you like. Your play, Leblanc."

It was a wonder to him, knowing as he did that Eriscourt, although he did not care much for cards, was a skilful player, how he contrived to make no mistakes in making mistakes.

He himself had played into his friend's hands by that objection, but he did not relish winning over him.

Presently Venner sauntered up.

"Done your game?" said Leblanc.

"Yes. How's yours going?"

"We shall have done soon," said Eriscourt, "it's the last deal."

Venner sat down near them, alternately attending to them and sipping a glass of wine. He could not see but that Eriscourt was in earnest over the game. His indifferent play could not then be due to carelessness.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Greville, as the cards were swept up, "you've lost, Eriscourt."

"Well, then," said Eriscourt, with a touch of eagerness, "another game to retrieve the first."

Greville hesitated, really because he hated to win while the other lost. Eriscourt, not giving him time to speak, turned to Venner.

"Since Greville won't, will you?" he said.

"I am sure these gentlemen are not tired of winning. Or any other game—bridge—carte—?"

"Baccarat," suggested Leblanc, who longed to pluck anew this foolish golden bird.

"No, no," said Venner, interposing, "not baccarat. I'll join you with pleasure, Mr. Eriscourt. Shall it be bridge?"

"If you like."

Greville and Venner changed seats, and the game began. Eriscourt's fortunes were fluctuating, and Greville watched less the game than one of the players with intense interest.

It needed skill to feign ignorance, and still greater skill to alternate his gains and losses with such perfect appearance of likelihood.

It was as if he were stirred up by his losses, and perhaps by his exhibition of inferiority. He even seemed vexed when he failed. Greville's excitement grew terribly; he had such quick sympathy with the man he loved more dearly in these last few days than ever he had done before.

The game became very close—for a while it seemed a toss-up who would sweep up the gains.

The two Frenchmen became highly excited. Venner was as cool as ice, conscious of his skill, and not of the temperament to be roused by any crisis.

Eriscourt, neither over-excited nor over cool, seemed to vary in mood—but betrayed a certain anxiety when the game went against him; if, on the contrary, he made a point for himself, he was quietly satisfied.

Greville could not help watching him, conjecturing what it was all to lead to, disturbed at the cost Eriscourt seemed paying; and in the midst of these thoughts, in which he had somewhat lost himself, he started as Eriscourt suddenly pushed back his chair.

"What an unlucky beggar I am!" he said, half vexedly, half laughing. "Mr. Venner, you have fairly beaten me, and I must compliment you on your play. But you will give me a chance for revenge?"

"Certainly—with the greatest pleasure," said Venner. "When shall we say?"

"I can't quite say. I am not a member, you see, and Greville is engaged all this week."

Greville half opened his lips to say that one of the engagements could be put aside, when Erlscourt's eyes met his. There was scarcely a change in them, yet Greville understood, and immediately Venner said, urbanely:

"But I should be very pleased to act as friendly member, any night you can spare, if you would not mind just calling at my chambers."

"Oh, thanks. You are very good. I will certainly call."

Venner handed him one of his cards with the question:

"You are not going yet, are you?"

"No, but I shall not play any more. I think I have lost enough."

"Come and have a cigar in the smoking-room, then," said Venner. "Come, Greville, or do you play?"

Greville declined playing, and Erlscourt accepting the proposal, the three went off to the smoking-room—a comfortable apartment on the second floor.

The three men, ensconced in the easiest of easy-chairs, smoked for a few minutes in silence till Erlscourt began:

"So you know the Danbys, Mr. Venner? They are very old friends of my brother's—"

"Your brother?" said Venner.

"I mean brother-in-law, but it's the same thing."

"Do you look on the relationship in that light? I've often thought it's a rather objectionable mode of regarding it."

"I don't think I get at your meaning—why?" said Erlscourt, looking at Venner with an intemperate long lashes veiled.

"Suppose the husband and wife are at daggers drawn—"

"As they very often are," put in the other.

Venner laughed.

"So they are. Well, in that case the wife's relations might object to that brotherly sentiment."

"Or it might cut the other way," said Erlscourt. "I should imagine if a man got tired of his wife he would want to repudiate his brotherhood with her sisters."

"I don't see, if he did," said Greville, "how his dislike of the fact would alter the fact."

"Is it a fact?" asked Venner.

"Don't for heaven's sake go into such a deep question to-night," said Erlscourt, lazily.

"All I can say is I've been taught to consider it so, but it doesn't concern me. I am not burdened with a wife."

"Faith! nor I," said Venner, with a laugh, "nor don't intend to be."

"You're wise," said Erlscourt. "One gives up freedom when one marries."

"What heresy!" cried Greville, impulsively. "There is a bondage that is better than liberty."

"I should like to know where it is, then," said Leigh. "Not in marriage; a man can't manage a woman, and the result is that the woman manages the man. From the moment that happens he can't say his soul is his own, unless he becomes a tyrant, and he can't quite do that. He can't oppress a woman."

Venner sat looking down, smoking away at his cigar, then he said, with a certain uneasiness, as if he must say something but were doubtful how his hearers would receive it:

"Women are the deuce sometimes, though."

"Oh, you go in for the tyrant rôle, then?" said Erlscourt. "But that won't answer with some women."

"I don't see why not," said Venner, adding quickly, "of course I don't approve of it."

"Of course not," echoed Erlscourt. "That is a matter without doubt! If you don't see why not, though, my opinion may enlighten you. I should say a woman with any spirit would—" he leant his head back again, looking at Venner without seeming to do so—"leave the man who, being her husband, was also her tyrant."

"And a good riddance, too!" said Venner, savagely.

Erlscourt began to laugh.

"My dear fellow," he said, "you say that with such good-will one would think you had been troubled with some deuce of a woman. But you are, like me, happily free."

"Well," said Venner, "if I did answer warmly it is because I have seen amongst friends the misery a woman can cause."

There are some people who intuitively detect falsehood. They feel it by some process not belonging to reason or any of the physical senses, and Erlscourt was one of these. Natural as was Venner's explanation, easy his manner, the painter had no belief in its truth. He accepted the explanation with an, "Ah, in that case you have an excuse," and Venner had no idea but that he had successfully retrieved his slight mistake.

Shortly after the two artists took their leave. Greville had but to glance in the other's face as the lights outside flashed on to it to see that he was in reality anything but calm. But he asked no questions, and Erlscourt volunteered no information. The only allusion he made to the evening was:—

"Thanks, Greville; you have helped me."

"I am very glad," was the answer; "but I feel miserable about my winnings; it is positive cheating."

"Give them to a church, then," said the other. "I will not touch them."

Greville went to bed and to sleep. His conjectures, though anxious, were not of a nature to keep awake a young man in high health and considerably tired, but Erlscourt made no attempt at sleep—it had never been further from him.

He went to his studio, threw up the blinds, letting in the dawning morning light, and then sat down by a table, leaning his folded arms on it, and bowing his head down on them.

Heart and soul were in a tumult, so sorely tempted, so wildly questioning; just the step he had gained to-night had been another clue.

Was he called upon to go further? What was it to him or Violet?

Let the man go; he had denied any rights, he had cast her off; well, then, forget him, forget the torture, and let them be happy.

Why should they be parted? Why should he be half mad to see her, to hear her voice, and be denied?

She was spotless; why try to prove her stained? It was man's law, unjust, implacable, that forbade them, not Heaven's. Love itself gave rights, love overshadowed the rights the bare law gave.

It seemed all so specious to a man blinded by his own passion, it opened up such a glowing vista for his eyes to dwell on; for his heart to rest in.

The world knew nothing; none could accuse her, and he never would. But the man was too noble, too pure-souled not to awake from that dream; not to see its falseness, not to be overwhelmed with remorse and humiliation until the overwrought physique gave way in heavy sobs.

When he lifted his face the sun was just throwing its faint gleams on the different objects in the room—the easel, the pictures on the walls, the flowers in the hearth.

Erlscourt looked round the familiar room, yet so strangely unfamiliar, as rooms we know will look at dawn, then got up and fetched pencil and drawing-paper.

The anguish of the past hour had left him, if physically wearied, mentally strong and strangely quiet, the half-numbed feeling that follows deep emotion.

He began his sketch, and went on steadily, hearing but not noticing the sounds of life within and without the house.

A man's head grew under his hand, exquisitely drawn, every line and shadow correct, a vivid likeness, not a stiff representation, showing, as Kingsley has it, the perfection of portraiture, not what the man is as he sits before the artist, but what the man is in himself—his capacities, his possibilities.

It was a hard task, but he forced himself to it, finished it, and locked it away, then wrote a few lines to Violet Herbert, beginning abruptly without superscription, asking her to say when she could see him.

This note was given to the factotum manservant, with orders to take it at once, and wait for an answer.

Not very long afterwards the man came to his master, and delivered a note.

"When you like," wrote Violet. "I shall be at home all day. My time is free; it is for you to choose the hour."

Erlscourt kissed the letter a dozen times before he put it away. Of course, he did not destroy it.

To-day he should see her—to-day. The mere thought was like a song!

CHAPTER XIX.

"What can he want with me?" thought Violet Herbert, not without a certain trembling fear.

She knew no light thing, no mere longing to see her, would make Erlscourt be the first to break through the rule she had laid down. He might suffer, but he would be silent to the end if she so chose it. To say that she was not glad that it had been in some way necessary to transgress her wishes would not be true.

She had had many an hour of heartfelt yearning, of unbearable loneliness, blaming herself for needless care, for cruelty, and yet not daring to write to him, "I cannot bear absence; come." No, she could not do that. But as the time drew near when he might come, she looked at her watch every second, and every second was as an hour.

She was restless, walking from room to room, then finally betaking herself to her boudoir, where she could not sit still an instant, but walked to and fro continually. The excitement made her look her best to-day; it flushed her cheek, and made the soft lips tremulous and the large eyes brilliant. She looked so young, too; the lines of pain seemed to have smoothed themselves away, the brow looked more serene.

When at last she heard the well-known step, and his voice saying something to Lucie, she pressed her hands over her heart as if its beating suffocated her, and, hurriedly seating herself by the fire, made a pretence of being deeply absorbed in a book.

She could scarcely answer "yes" to his "May I come in?" She felt irresistibly impelled to run to him, but by an effort restrained herself.

Was it well, that decree of hers? Would there have been half the passionate joy each felt if this meeting had been only after a few days' or even a week's separation. Would every thought in each heart have been bent so absorbingly on the other through a shorter separation? Must it not be either one or the other, either entire parting, or meeting as they had done before?

Through all her half-bewildering rapture she could not help such questionings thronging on her mind. The very clasp that held her ever closer and closer made such misgivings more vivid. She understood that she had but intensified where she had meant to subdue.

Erlscourt loosed her at last, but not before he had held her off a little and looked at her with a keenness that brought the colour to her face. She knew how easy it was for him to read that she too had been weary and heart-sick.

"I am quite well," she said, trying to give a direction to his thoughts she was quite conscious they had not had. She tempted him to make the answer he had not otherwise uttered. "You look very different from what you did the last time I saw you."

Her assumption of ease fell at once. "Ah," she said, turning half aside, "don't reproach me. Perhaps I have been cruel only I did not mean to. If I suffered alone, but you have suffered, too! Perhaps I have not been wise."

"How easy it is to see," said Erlscourt, "that you have had but little love. You are always conscience stricken, always magnifying mistakes into sins. I did not mean the slightest reproach by what I said. I was not thinking of myself at all but of you. I have obeyed you, and will obey you again if you choose it."

He had drawn her within his arm again as he spoke, with the tenderness that manner and voice unconsciously took when speaking to her.

She could not quite bring herself to release him from that obedience in so many words. It was not easy for her to tell him that she herself had no strength to obey herself; but, following her impulse, she put one hand quickly on his, a touch light and soft as a child's, but what child's could ever have said so much?

Erlscourt took the hand in both his own. "Do you know what trust you have shown me?" he said. "Ah, Violet, it is such women as you that make men a little nearer to the angels!"

He dropped her hand. Violet went and sat down by a small table, trembling a little. He walked up and down for a few minutes. The task he had viewed with such ineffable dread seemed harder than ever. How should he begin? How save her from a shock?

Turning at the end of the small room and coming again towards her, he caught her wistful look, and suddenly pausing by her chair, leant on it.

"Violet, you half guess why I have come?" "Is it about Edgar Marsden?" she asked; she never said "my husband."

Her voice was very low, but perfectly steady. She had learnt self-control in a bitter school.

"You make my task easier, dearest. I want you to look at a sketch I have brought of a man I know as Gilbert Venner, and tell me if it is or is not Edgar Marsden."

Standing half behind her, he could not see her face; perhaps he did not want her to see his. He laid the sketch on the table beside her.

In dead silence, with hands pressed together, and breath drawn in long, heavy throbs, otherwise without movement, Violet looked on the face she had last seen on the darkest day of her life.

Not all the changes of seven years, not all the deeper changes of a life of unrestrained licence, could deceive her. Perfect art had reached the recesses of the man's soul, and placed the man himself before her as he was when he had flung her dishonour in her face.

Erlscourt waited till the minutes seemed hours, till he had almost touched her or spoken; before he could do either, she had twisted herself round, looking up at him, a white face, a glow in the great wide eyes, a lip that quivered uncontrollably, an anguish, a passion, a fire that seemed to change her. Her very voice was altered, hard, hoarse, broken.

"Yes, it is he!" she said. "That is the man I trusted—man, do I say! Heaven sometimes lets devils be born into the world!"

Erlscourt quietly drew the sketch out of her sight; as he did so she turned herself away from him again, then flung her arms out on the table before her, and the fair head went down.

Erlscourt only bent over her, laying tenderest touch on the soft curling hair; he knew she would bear nothing more.

He was quiet with the sort of tense quiet that we feel at such times, almost as if our own feeling were deadened, but in reality because it is absorbed, drawn into somebody else's need.

A long, shivering sigh, then Violet lifted her head.

"Leigh you are not gone?" she said, half dazed.

"I am always here when you want me, my darling."

"I do want you."

He drew the bright head against him, smoothing back the wavy hair from her fore-

head, thinking sadly enough how strangely the positions of man and woman were changed, and he was so often the comforter as well as the upholder.

"It brought it all back!" she whispered. "If I could ever forget that day! I never shall, not if I live a thousand years. And yet it was the day I first saw you. Do you know how I love to recall that I owe my life to you? I think of it so often!"

"And I, too, and sometimes, Violet, I cannot believe that we were brought so strangely together to be parted at last."

She lifted herself suddenly, setting her teeth.

"I would rather that," she said, "than than—oh, do not think that I love you less because I love honour more, and yet I love honour best, half because I love you. Now, there is always a cloud, always."

"Violet, would Heaven I could make it always sunshine for you!" said Erlscourt, brokenly.

"Come round here," said Violet, softly, then as he obeyed, "kneel down so—so that I can see your face."

He did as she told him; sweeter she had never seemed to him, deeper adoration he had never felt for her.

"You give me all the sunshine I can know," she said, "you have lifted me out of despair and self-contempt; you twice saved my life; you taught me that I was not utterly worthless; you gave me happiness in spite of all; you now are doing your utmost to lift the cloud from my life, even though it cast an immovable one on yours. Do you think I don't know what it costs you—"

"Violet—"

"Hush! Do you think I don't know what it costs you to meet this man, to spend hours over this picture of him?"

"What is all that when I love you? How can anything be too hard that is for you?"

Looking down into his face, instinct with the enthusiasm of a love that counts sacrifice as joy, she said:

"I wonder how many women have had given to them a love like yours? I wonder what could ever repay it?"

"It merits—it wants none—but love."

"Well, you have that. Perhaps I ought not to say all this to you, but you have borne, you will bear, so much for me, and I cannot stay you, you will not yield!"

"Never! How could you love me if I did?"

"But, Leigh, do you know that the hardest part of the task you have set yourself is before you now? It is a sacrifice no woman could ever ask, or even expect. This man is your enemy because he is mine. You must seem to be his friend. I can see that must be your plan, because there is none other. You must be false, you so stainlessly true. You must incur the suspicion of your own friends—Marsden stamps the man who associates with him."

"Violet, why do you talk so? You are not doubting me, are you? You are not thinking that I shall falter because I must suffer? What is the love worth that shirks suffering? You do not think my love will grow cold, and I shall ask impatiently why I am fool enough to work without hope of reward? I have counted all the cost. Can it be counted? Are you testing me?" said Erlscourt, looking almost perplexed.

"No. And if you have counted the cost, what does it seem to you?"

"Why, nothing!"

"If any one else had said that to me," said Violet, "I should not believe it. I should think it was a self-deception or a falsity. But you—your eyes are truth itself. No, I was not testing you, and I never doubted you. You would ask why I have put it all before you. You have had so bright a life that I was not sure you realised it all. It is not easy, unless one has suffered, to know all that suffering entails. One has to experience it."

"I know it partly already, Violet, and I have not flinched. I will own it to you"—he went on, hurriedly—"as you have divined—that it was agony to meet him, to have his face before me, nay, more, that it seemed a terrible injustice that all my boundless love could not outweigh his bare rights. I have passed through the fire! You will believe me—you will not think I deceive myself?"

"No," said Violet, gently. She hesitated, then bent forward, and for a second her lips touched his forehead. That soft, light, half-timid kiss thrilled through him. Was not last night's anguish trebly repaid? "Now, tell me," Violet said, presently, when he had risen, "where you met—well, let us call him Venner."

"I met him first at the Danbys, you know who I mean. I did not recognise him at all from your description, as you will see from the sketch I scarcely could."

"He is so altered. What then made you think he was Marsden?"

"Violet, what curious link has that picture of mine with our lives? It was that that gave me the first vague idea about you, and that that made me suspect Venner's identity. I am glad now I was obliged to let the picture be exhibited."

Then he told her how he had come to be in the gallery, and how Venner had started at sight of "Forsaken," and afterwards questioned him about the model.

"I don't say I made up my mind, but it gave me a suspicion. I got Greville to take me to King's, which place Venner frequents."

"But, Leigh," said Violet, with dilating eyes and starting up, "you must not run such risk. I know what you have done. You have pretended to love play, to be ignorant of it, you have lost to Edgar—he always was a gambler—to let him think he has a hold on you. Oh, it is too much! Think of your reputation."

"I will risk that, dearest! but do you mean that my friends will think ill of me?"

"I did mean that partly, and besides, clubs, such as King's, get noticed by the police. Sooner or later they make raids on them. Think, if your name got mixed up with such a scandal!"

"It all comes back to the old thing," said Erlscourt, "it is for you, and that ends the matter!"

"But you will be careful? I wish I could move you," she said, in deep distress. "I know him so well. If you make the slightest slip, if once he suspects, he will be unscrupulous, and he will not fight in the open field, that was never his way. But it is useless to say much—"

"And only pains me. I cannot bear to refuse you, and yet I must. I must succeed, I will succeed. I mean to get a hold over him, it is not so difficult. He is the sort of man who does not always play fair; and at times, so I hear, he is not over careful as to wine. You are white, dear one, and still reluctant. I will not be reckless, I vow to you. I will keep a curb on myself. This little hand of yours," taking in both his the hand she put in entreaty on his arm, "these soft eyes of yours, asking so much, are powers I could not gainsay if I would. You are never more in my heart than when I am fighting for you. Are you satisfied?"

"On that point, yes. On others, I must be, and 'musts' are generally hard."

But she acknowledged to herself that it would have been harder still if he had yielded. She could not then, as she did now when he had left her, think of him with a heart full of overflowing of tender pride. Come what might, he would never cause her that keenest of sorrows—disappointment.

CHAPTER XX.

That sometime peaceable and sedate household in Hamilton Terrace had of late become much disturbed—not in any indecorous fashion. It was as regular, as well ordered, as exasperating a model as ever; but there was a cer-

tain atmosphere which was felt by all, from master to kitchen-maid.

It was like a circular storm, a small area of turmoil, outside that area the serene calm. It was difficult to say where the centre of the storm lay; whether in the preoccupation of the mistress or the irritability of Dora—for she had become decidedly irritable, not to say at times snappy, and generally so towards her cousin Emily.

Whatever the head of the house thought he kept to himself. He was excessively busy, and constantly had to work in the evening in his private room, and not sorry for the necessity either.

His wants, not exacting, were cared for as assiduously as usual; he had nothing to complain of but the atmosphere.

One night, after reading part of a heavy brief in his study, he went up to his room, somewhat past eleven, expecting to find his wife's dressing-room empty, but to his surprise the light streamed brilliantly from the partly opened door.

For Emily to forget to turn the gas down would have been so extraordinary a proceeding that it never entered her husband's head. He fell back on the less extraordinary proceeding of her not yet having gone to bed. He opened the door further and went in. There sat Emily before the toilet table; she was not yet undressed, and was evidently in a brown study.

"Emily," said Challoner, surprised, "are you not well?"

"Come in, Arthur. Yes, I am quite well. Have you finished your brief?"

"Not quite, but as I was getting muddled-headed I thought it better to get some rest and finish work at chambers. What has kept you up, my dear?"

"I was thinking."

"I see that. Don't you think sleeping is better?"

"It is not very late, and there is so much to worry one that I did not feel at all inclined for sleep."

"Your boy, again, of course," said Challoner good-naturedly, settling himself in an arm-chair. "I've seen for some time that you were not in your usual spirits, and as to Dora, there's something the matter with her temper, but I haven't liked to say anything. Things often right themselves if they're let alone. I hope you have no fault to find with Dora?"

"Oh, she has not so much to do with it all," said Emily.

"It all sounded vague to the lawyer, used to precise definitions; "the said Dora is not the chief cause of the said worry," would have been more in his line, but years of married life had taught many things, and one was to wait.

"I can't make out Leigh at all," said Emily, with tears in her eyes. "What do you think I hear now?"

"I can't imagine at all," was the grave answer. "Where do you find out so much, Emmie?"

"Naturally, since we know so many people he knows. And there are the young Danbys constantly down in the West-end. I daresay just where they ought not to be."

"Then they certainly wouldn't see Leigh," said Challoner, still more gravely than before.

"Oh, I don't know that," said Emily, with a movement of the head that had she been the cook would have developed into a toss. "Of course you have heard of King's Club in Street?"

"I believe I heard of it quite a year ago. It is a club started by a Mr. George King and devoted to the requirements of gentlemen who like very high play," said Challoner.

"Did you know," demanded Emily, "that Leigh went there?"

"I did; but I am not his keeper!"

"You knew it," she said, turning on her quiet husband so fiercely that a timid man might have been startled.

Challoner was only very quiet, but he had never been over-awed by his wife.

"My dear," said he, "this is a domestic comedy, not a tragedy. Leigh has never taken amiss any advice I have given him. I shouldn't like to say whether he always followed it, that's quite another thing; but I don't see that his present delinquency calls for interference."

"I am surprised at you, Arthur. Do you want my brother to become a gambler?"

"Certainly not; but I don't think he will."

"You can't approve of his going to a club like that. He has his own club, the Travelers; if he wants cards or billiards why doesn't he go there, where he meets gentlemen, and the play is conducted in a proper manner? But this place—where they positively gamble and all sorts of people meet!"

"Where have you become so learned, Emily?" said her husband, amusedly.

"Tom Danby told me a good deal. He goes to King's himself, I am sorry to say. I pointed out to him how wrong and ungentlemanly it was, and the danger of becoming a gambler."

"Never mind Tom Danby; he has a father and mother who are responsible for his morals."

"And what mother has my boy known but me?" said Emily, tearfully. "But they are all alike; we toil, and think, and pray for them, and they go their own way, and if we try a word of remonstrance they keep away."

The amount of general truth in this, and her distress, prevented Challoner from making any reply that might hurt her feelings. Emily assiduously dried her eyes with her handkerchief while her husband said soothingly,—

"Don't cry, my dear. I don't think Leigh deserves such a condemnation. If you knew the frightful trouble some young fellows are! After all, he has never given you a real heart-ache. Forgive me for saying it, but you do exaggerate anything he does. What is his offence now? Going occasionally—"

"Occasionally! He is often there!"

"I should like to know the authority for that. We will say he goes, without specifying the exact number of times. It doesn't follow because he plays that he plays high. He is not at all likely to take to gambling. It isn't a temptation to him, and besides, he is too busy."

"Evil companionship will lead to anything. You can't say, Arthur, that you approve of a young man going to these dreadful clubs."

"No, I don't; but also I don't approve of pulling them up sharp."

"It is not likely, if I wished it, that I should be able to do that," said Emily. "Leigh has quite given up making this house a second home. He cannot bear a word to be said to him, not even from me!"

"Are you sure that is entirely his fault?" asked Challoner. Fond as he was of his wife he did not at all wonder that Leigh did not appreciate her counsels and admonitions.

"Do you mean it is mine?" asked Emily, indignantly.

"If you want my opinion, yes. I have seen Leigh take things from you as many young men would not. A temper like that can't be difficult to manage, but if you will not resent my saying so, I don't think you do manage him. Perhaps you don't understand him, or he doesn't understand you. At any rate, you hector him too much, and all the affection and gratitude in the world won't make a proud spirit bear coercion. You say you have been a mother to him; so you have, as far as anyone else can fill that place. But you are not his mother, and it is impossible he should submit to you as he might to his mother."

"How can I let him go to his ruin without saying a word?"

"It is not the word I object to, but how the word is said. And Leigh never was near going to ruin. What a strong expression!"

"Not when he gets into the toils of a designing woman! Not when he takes to gambling because of her!" exclaimed Emily. "It is all through her that he is giving me up. I wonder if he thinks he is breaking my heart!" and she sobbed unrestrainedly.

(To be continued next week.)

WORRY AND SUSPENSE

Off some men misfortunes glide, leaving no trace. Whether it be a petty irritation, such as the loss of a collar stud, or a serious trouble, like a financial collapse, they, as it were, murmur "Kismet," and wave the burden on one side with a smile. They find a strange solace in proverbial philosophy, and quote aphorisms about "spilt milk," "a hundred years hence," and "what can't be cured." Like reeds, they bow their heads before the storm, and, when it has passed, they lift them again, and wander at the footsilliness of the elms, which, resisting, have been lopped of some of their branches. Figuratively speaking, they follow their friends body to the grave overcome with tears, and will return whistling a jig. In short, their feelings are veritable shadows, in which they cannot be submerged. They are not callous, for their sympathies and their griefs are momentarily intense; but the intensity is that of the thunderstorm, which has passed almost before we have time to recognise its severity. Worry has no place in their economy, for worry implies a measure of persistence, and this they do not know—except the persistence of ebbing and flowing.

This is one extreme. The other is to be found in those who are never free from worry. They are for ever regretting the past and fearing the future. To them every bush is a robber, and every moment fraught with danger to their persons or their enterprises. A scratch on the finger suggests blood-poisoning, and a bad day's trade threatens the bankruptcy court. Good fortune, even, has its dark side, for it is not inevitable that luck must turn. The law of averages is invoked to prove that bad must follow good, though bad, it is argued, goes to worse.

If we had wholly the making of our own temperaments—in a measure we have—we should not choose either of these extremes, though the former is, of the two, to be preferred; for optimism, even in its most foolish guise, is better than pessimism.

A WOMAN.

If you deceive me,
Ah, deceive me well and kindly!
Lead me, since I follow blindly!
Keep your mask; with roses wreath it;
Save me from the lie beneath it!
Worn for once, to serve your art,
Breaking it, you break my heart.

If you bereave me
Of the love that nourished me,
Ah, bereave me utterly!
Never leave pale Hope to languish
Twixt suspense and certain anguish.
Cold, grey ashes cannot sear,
Nor a few faint embers cheer!

If you leave me,
Let it be within the hour
When Love loses life and power,
Lest dull disenchantment borrow
From the splendour of my sorrow.
Wait not till the heart is dust;
Leave me soon, if leave you must!

If you believe me
When I vow my heart to you,
Ah, believe belief is true;
Turn a doubting ear to doubt;
Drive jade jealousy without.
All Love's hurts were bravely borne,
Save—from you—one moment's scorn!

THE GOLDEN HOPE

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS.

Lady Redwoode, the owner and undisputed proprietor of all the fair domain of Redwoode, has been left a widow a year or more previous to the opening of the story. Lord Redwoode left no heir, but expressed a wish that on the decease of his wife the estates should pass to their nephew, Andrew Forsythe, and never doubted Lady Redwoode's compliance with his wishes. Mr. Forsythe was musing over many things, and wondering what would happen to him should his aunt marry again. Judge then of his surprise when Lady Redwoode tells him the story of her early life. Secretly married when quite a girl, in order not to arouse the anger of her brother, with whom she was living in India, there came a day when it was necessary to tell all, and the news that followed caused Lady Redwoode to fall into convulsions, and she lay ill for many weeks. On returning to life and consciousness, it was to find herself a widow and a mother.

Sir Richard Houghton, although but twenty-seven, was lost all joy in life through an unhappy marriage. News is brought to him that his divorced wife, Margaret Somers, is dying, and the messenger eagerly begs an interview on the pretext that Margaret desires Sir Richard's forgiveness. Margaret fails to rekindle the old love, and swears that no other woman shall ever become his wife.

Now Lady Redwoode's brother is dead, and as an act of reparation has sent all the necessary proofs of her first marriage, but the secret of the identity of her own child dies with him. The two girls are coming to England, and it is for Lady Redwoode to discover which of the two is her daughter. After a little hesitation in coming to so momentous a decision, the choice falls on Cecile, who at once sets to work to ingratiate herself with Lady Redwoode at the expense of her foster-sister Hellice, and in this she is ably seconded by the Hindoo ayah. Cecile's relationship is proclaimed to the assembled household; and to Hellice, who watches this rejoicing without one pang of envy, there suddenly comes a feeling of loneliness, and she turns unobserved into the garden to seek comfort among the shade of the trees. It is thus that she discovers Sir Richard Houghton, who for one moment gazes on the lovely vision ere it is lost to view. "I must see her again," he says, "Whoever and whatever she is I recognise her as my fate."

CHAPTER XLXI. Continued.

MR. FORSYTHE was startled at the old man's earnestness. Cecile sneered—unmistakably, plainly sneered. The lawyer marked the curl of her lip, and shrank from her in horror and detestation.

"Your devotion to mamma is really quite romantic," said the young lady, still with her unlovely sneer. "Quite an earnest, even if humble, lover, I should say. I daresay, Mr. Kenneth, you fancy that, if mamma had lived, she might have installed you in place of the late Lord Redwoode. Is it not so?"

Mr. Kenneth was shocked beyond expression by this speech. To him, who knew so well how truly the Baroness had mourned her late husband, the words savoured of irreverence. He had loved and admired the Baroness as one loves and admires a bright, glorious, and unattainable object.

No earthly taint had mingled with his reverent worship. To link their names together, his with hers, seemed to him a sort of impiety. He had never dreamed, hoped, nor desired such a marriage. He was alarmed at the very thoughts now so rudely expressed by Cecile.

"Mrs. Forsythe," he said, proudly, with bitter emphasis, "Lady Redwoode at times doubted that you were her own child. I shared her doubts. I doubt no longer. It is my belief, notwithstanding all contrary evidence, that Hellice has been foully wronged—that she is innocent of all crime, or thoughts of crime—and that she is the true and only daughter of the late Baroness. As soon as I shall have recovered the body of my friend I shall devote myself to a search for Hellice. I shall study her claims. I will go to India, if need be, for evidence. And if there be a shadow of justice on her side, Hellice shall yet be recognised as Hellice Avon, and you will take your place as the daughter of Horatio Quintwick!"

With these words, more startling than a thunder-peal, the old lawyer bowed and retired from the apartment, leaving the alarmed young pair to gaze at each other in mute as-

tonishment. They heard his steps ringing on the tessellated pavement of the hall, heard the outer door close behind him, heard the retreating sounds of wheels, and knew that Mr. Kenneth's arrangements for departure had all been made before he had answered their summons.

As their first impulse of alarm subsided a sense of mortification succeeded.

"The miserable little wretch!" ejaculated Cecile, more forcibly than elegantly. "It won't do him much good, I fancy, to recover the body of his beloved Lady Redwoode. He can have her interred if he likes. Thank Fortune! her interment won't rob us of our new possessions!"

"But Hellice!" suggested the more cautious and fearful Mr. Forsythe. "If he were to find her and Mr. Anchester, he would make out a strong case against us. Mr. Anchester knows so much—"

"Which he will never tell till Hellice becomes his wife!" declared Cecile, confidently. "And Hellice never will be. She loves Sir Richard Houghton, you know. I know my cousin well enough to feel assured that Mr. Anchester will plead to her in vain. My own opinion is that Mr. Anchester will shut her up somewhere till she consents—and that she will perish and die, leaving us to the undisturbed enjoyment of our riches!"

"But if otherwise?"

"We will contest her claims," said Cecile, with compressed lips. "Mr. Anchester will give evidence in her favour—but what is he? An adventurer, a gambler, a worthless fellow, as I can prove from the evidence of various persons now in England, who have met him in India. Look at the evidence I can bring! My resemblance to Lady Redwoode, Renee's statements, my mother's recognition of me. Will it not tell powerfully in my favour that Lady Redwoode claimed me, and died believing me to be her child? I defy Kenneth! I defy Darcy Anchester! I defy Hellice! If she comes back to contest my claims, I will prove against her this double-poisoning business. The servants will all attest that she did not deny her guilt, when discovered in mamma's chamber. Miss Kenneth shall give evidence—and Hellice's name shall be so blackened that she will gladly creep away and die!"

"You ought to have been a man and a lawyer, Cecile!" said her husband, admiringly, "I believe of us two you monopolise the brains!"

"That is so!" said the grim voice of the Hindoo ayah, as she came in from the conservatory, where she had been resting for an hour past. "Cecile does credit to my training. So the lawyer has gone. We are well rid of the old spy."

She crossed the room, hideous in her gorgeous apparel, looking like a caricature, with her lace flowers, her fire-coloured jewellery, her elegant robe, and sank into an easy-chair, her turban and her tinkling ear-rings keeping time with her movements.

Neither Mr. Forsythe nor his wife protested against this intrusion. Renee was their confederate in guilt, and they dared not do otherwise than be friendly to her. They were beginning to feel that though they were monarchs here, Renee was a "power behind the throne." They looked up to her and leaned upon her with implicit faith in her superior subtleties and duplicity, which faith was not misplaced.

The trio continued the conversation a considerable length, but at length it flagged, and each became more thoughtful, though none the less well pleased.

At the moment their sense of security was deepest an incident occurred that threatened, more than they dreamed, to annihilate it. It was simple enough—merely the appearance of

the hall-porter at the drawing-room door, with the words:

"If you please, Mr. Forsythe, there is a poor person at the door who insists upon seeing you and Mrs. Forsythe. I think he is one of the kind of persons that Lady Redwoode used to assist. He looks like a fisherman."

Cecile frowned at the servant's garrulity, and said, sharply:

"Tell him to go. You can let him know that a new sort of rule is established at Redwoode now. We do not encourage beggars!"

"But, madam," said the servant, in some perplexity, retreating a step or two, "the man said, in case you refused to see him, that I was to tell you his name was Luke Jensen."

The young couple felt alike a chill of foreboding. It occurred to each that this Jensen, who had been their apt instrument, had come to establish himself as a leech upon them. They anticipated trouble with him, but not the faintest premonition of the news he brought.

"Oh, it's the sailor fellow that took us out on the sea!" said Renee, the first to recover her presence of mind. "You offered such a large reward for Lady Redwoode's body, Mr. Forsythe, that this man may have searched day and night until he has recovered it. I have heard that, after a certain length of time, their dead bodies always rise and float—"

"Yes, that is it!" declared Mr. Forsythe, with a breath of relief. "Send him in," he added, addressing the servant. "Perhaps he brings news of the recovery of Lady Redwoode's body!"

Cecile put her black-bordered handkerchief to her eyes, and seemed almost overcome with grief.

The servant retired, ushering in Luke Jensen, who closed the door behind him, and advanced to the centre of the room.

He stood there a moment, open-mouthed, looking around him at the luxurious scene in complete astonishment, but was recalled to himself by Mr. Andrew Forsythe, who did not rise from his reclining attitude, as he said:

"Well, my man, what is it? Have you found the body of Lady Redwoode, and have you come to claim the reward?"

Luke Jensen looked around him a second time, very cautiously, and then he replied, in a loud shrill whisper:

"Ay, ay, sir. I've found her ladyship's body—"

Mr. Forsythe sprang up to a sitting position, eager and excited. Cecile dropped her handkerchief, and leaned forward with parted lips. Renee stared, with her glittering eyes distended to their utmost width.

"You've found it!" cried Mr. Forsythe. "It was floating, of course? You did not drag for it?"

"No—no—not exactly. See here, Mr. Forsythe, was the reward offered for the body dead or alive?"

"What do you mean?" ejaculated Mr. Forsythe, turning pale.

"Simply what I say!"

The schemers were almost stunned at the man's manner and words. Jensen watched them with a furtive smile, and said:

"Lady Redwoode's body has been found, as you have guessed. It was alive, though, and is now—"

Mr. Forsythe sprang to his feet, looking like a galvanised corpse. Cecile with difficulty repressed a shriek. The Hindoo sat as if carved from stone.

"Alive? She is alive!" said Mr. Forsythe, in a husky voice.

Jensen nodded assent.

"She is perhaps on her way here!"

"No, not yet. She is not able to travel. She was intending to come yesterday, but circumstances prevented," said Jensen, with a disagreeable smile.

"But this story is incredible," said Mr. Forsythe, impatiently. "If she were rescued, why did we not know it at the time? The search was kept up until it became foolish."

Where has she been this week past? Why has she not come home to denounce us, to claim her own?"

"For a very good reason," replied Jenson. "If there ain't no danger o' being overheard, I'll tell you the whole story!"

"We had better retire to the music-room," said Cecile. "No one can interrupt us there. We are liable to be intruded upon here!"

She led the way, with tottering steps, to the adjoining music-room, whither she was followed by the remainder of the party.

And here Luke Jenson unburdened himself of the whole narrative of the rescue of Lady Redwoode, her subsequent illness, the visit of the cowardly Rills to him, and his recovery of the person of the Baroness. The blood seemed to congeal in the veins of his listeners as he proceeded.

Fear and horror struggled for the mastery in their hearts. Thoughts of flight with what money they could command occurred to them. Disgrace and imprisonment loomed up darkly before them.

"And at this moment," concluded Jenson, "Lady Redwoode is back at Sorel Place, locked up in an upper back-chamber, waited upon by mother. The Rills don't care to make any knowledge about her ladyship, and, to make all sure and fast, I bound Rills by an oath. So the secret is still in our hands—mother's and mine."

"And you have come here to make terms?" said Renee, her confederates being incapable of speech.

"The very thing, ma'am. You've read my thoughts, as 'twere," said Jenson, pulling at a forelock by way of politeness. "Knowing how Mr. Forsythe was a-feelin', I made it a point to hurry here with the news very private, thinkin' as he'd feathered his nest out o' this business, maybe he'd feather mine!"

Cecile and Mr. Forsythe took heart, and gathered courage.

"Do you mean," demanded the latter, "that you will keep this recovery a secret for a consideration?"

"For a con-sid-er-a-tion!" repeated Jenson, slowly, with emphasis.

"But this imprisonment business isn't at all safe!" objected Renee. "Something is liable to occur at any time to release her. Then woe to us! No, let the thing be made sure. Lady Redwoode has been mourned and praised, and all that. Let her die in good earnest!"

"So say I!" muttered Cecile, with darkening face.

"See here, Jenson!" said the Hindoo, in a low tone, full of terrible meaning; "you know what we want. It was not your fault that the drowning turned out a failure. Do you want to be rich—rich enough to buy a home, or a ship, or anything you may wish? What would you do for riches?"

"Anything—anything!" responded the man, eagerly, his eyes sparkling greedily.

"You would not hesitate to undertake your late task over again?"

"No—no!"

The Hindoo looked into his very soul with

her piercing glances. Satisfied with his blackness and villainy, she did not hesitate to speak yet more boldly.

"It is for your interest that Lady Redwoode should die," she said, craftily. "Mr. Kenneth, the sharp old lawyer who was at Sorel Place, looking for the body, is going back again. He swears he will search till he finds it. He will discover her if she be living! You have seen enough of him to be aware of that!"

The man nodded, with signs of fear.

"Here is something that will settle the affair," said the ayah, drawing her small gold-bound casket from her bosom, unlocking it, and taking from it a tiny phial filled with a liquid like spring-water. "Give her that in her coffee, as soon as you return home. With the sea at hand, you will be at no loss for a safe and deep grave. Do, that Luke Jenson, and your fortune is made!"

Mr. Forsythe and Cecile confirmed the Hindoo's words.

"I will do it!" said Jenson, with grim determination. "This very night her ladyship shall take the poison! And then I shall claim a heavy reward at your hands!"

He put the phial in his pocket, while Mr. Forsythe, with reviving hope, promised a large and definite sum as the price of the man's villainy.

The four, so worthy of each other, passed a long time together, and when Jenson went away at last he carried a heavier purse, and a mind full of evil designs against the helpless inmate of his dwelling.

"I will give her this stuff!" he thought, "and then tell Rills her ladyship died on my hands in a relapse of fever. He shall help me bury her at sea from his sloop, and that'll bind him to silence for ever. I must manage it all to-night, before that lawyer-chap comes around!"

He hurried away towards Wharton, impatient to return home, while the trio at Redwoode, who had gained their fortune by such evil means, talked in shuddering whispers together over the means by which they sought to retain it!

CHAPTER XLVII.

Luke Jenson hurried away from Redwoode to a point at some distance in the road below, where he had left a fly in waiting. He entered the vehicle, and was driven rapidly back to Wharton, where he proceeded to hang about the station while awaiting the arrival of the train, by which he purposed returning home. He was sauntering up and down the platform, over which a few travellers were scattered, pausing now and then before some flaming advertisement, when he suddenly became aware that a keen and suspicious gaze was watching his face. Looking up in quick annoyance, he found himself face to face with Mr. Kenneth.

He instantly recognised him as the sharp old lawyer, whose questionings with regard to the capsule of the sloop, and whose prolonged stay in the neighbourhood of the accident had rendered him uneasy and alarmed.

He endeavoured now to appear careless and unconcerned, but his perturbation did not escape notice.

As he flushed guiltily under the glances of Mr. Kenneth, and manifested a desire to escape from them, the lawyer's face assumed an expression of severity, and his voice was stern, as he said:

"You are Jenson, the boatman, who lives at Sorel Place. You see, I remember you, my man. Why are you so afraid of me?"

Jenson stammered that the gentleman was mistaken; that he was simply surprised, not afraid, and that he was greatly delighted at the rencontre.

"What are you doing here?" questioned Mr. Kenneth, abruptly. "What errand has taken you over to Redwoode?"

"Nothing, sir, only to tell Mr. Forsythe that nothing has been found of her ladyship's body," was the response, as Jenson moved his

weight from one leg to the other, and endeavoured vainly to appear at his ease.

"Humph! All this journey for what a telegram or a letter would have better accomplished! I hope you don't expect me to credit that, my fine fellow. You had a motive—and what that motive is I shall set myself to discover!"

These words added infinitely to Jenson's disquietude. He looked around furtively, to assure himself that they had not been overheard; and then, as if fearing that the lawyer would drag his secret from him in spite of himself, moved away to the farther end of the platform.

Mr. Kenneth looked after him with a singular smile.

"A bad fellow, that!" he thought to himself. "He'll require watching. He acts like one with a heavy crime on his soul. Good heavens! Can it be? Have I stumbled upon the solution of the whole mystery! The conduct of Andrew Forsythe and Cecile since the death—her ladyship's previous uncertainty with regard to the identity of the two girls—it is incredible—impossible! And yet—"

A suspicion of the truth respecting the boat accident flashed upon his soul. His face grew paler, his breath came quicker, and he walked up and down the platform like a tiger in his cage.

Gradually he became calmer, but his calmness had in it something so terrible that Luke Jenson, stealing a glance at him, was frightened by it, realising that his wickedness was suspected, and that an enemy, more unerring and more relentless than a bloodhound, was upon his track.

A cold sweat sprang to his forehead and his knees trembled under him. He clutched, with one nervous hand, the phial Renee had given him, and which was hidden in a breast-pocket, as if through its means and its application to Lady Redwoode, he beheld alone a way of escape from threatening dangers.

And while he thus trembled and planned, the old lawyer, with no doubt of Lady Redwoode's untimely death, reviewed in his mind the whole sad story, carefully weighing facts, recalling words and looks, and weaving together a chain of circumstances that went far to confirm his suddenly-conceived suspicions. Then, he solemnly vowed himself to the task of avenging that cruel death, of bringing its projectors to deserved punishment, and of searching without rest for the wronged and exiled Helice.

"The first thing to be done is to give her ladyship's honoured ashes burial," he thought. "And then to work!"

The up-train at length arrived. Mr. Kenneth saw Jenson enter a third-class carriage, and then permitted a guard to bestow him, with his valise, into a first-class one, satisfied that the boatman was not intending to flee his home or evade observation.

The journey to the station nearest Sorel Place was accomplished in the usual number of hours. The lawyer alighted, witnessed the descent of Jenson, and then took his way to the inn, where Lady Redwoode had stopped with her companions, before proceeding to Sorel Place.

The night had long since come on. The lamps were lighted in the shops and dwellings, and of course no step could be taken in searching the Pool or its adjacent waters till morning.

Mr. Kenneth decided, therefore, to remain quietly at the inn that night, and to commence his investigations at daybreak.

If he had only known that the Baroness still lived, and that his very natural decision involved her fate!

Luke Jenson followed the lawyer to the inn, and hung about, in the shadow of the inn-yard, until fully convinced that no demonstration against him was to be entered upon that night, and then, much more at ease, he set out on a swift pace for home.

The night had deepened into the small hours of the morning when he came around

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to the rear entrance of Sorel Place, and opened the kitchen-door.

A fire burned low on the hearth, and a black earthen teapot was steaming on the hob. A tallow candle gave a dim light to the dreary old room, revealing on the table a tray, on which reposed a few articles of food.

Old Mrs. Jensen was crouching beneath the hearth, her face buried in her hands, but she sprang up quickly at the entrance of her son. "Well!" she exclaimed, startled at his haggard and excited aspect.

"Well!" responded Jensen, closing and bolting the door behind him. "How's her ladyship?"

"As clear-headed as ever! She's the same as when she first came here, only rather weak yet. I've taken good care of her to-day, Luke, and she has gained considerable strength. I gave her some of that French wine that musus used to like so well, but Lady Redwoode was so suspicious she wouldn't touch the wine unless she opened it herself. As to tea, she hasn't touched it. She's lived on boiled eggs and other things that couldn't be drugged. I suppose she thinks I want to poison her."

"How unfortunate!" ejaculated Luke, impatiently. "Has she made any attempt to escape?"

"Yes, she tried to get out of her window, so I nailed some wooden bars across it. She isn't so weak as you'd think, though to be sure she wasn't ill very long."

Luke flung himself into a chair, while his mother, still talking, busied herself with brewing a hot drink for him, bringing into requisition whisky and hot water, the former in liberal quantity. Luke drained from the bowl when presented to him, and relaxed from the moodiness into a state of confidence.

"There's something Mr. Forsythe gave me," he said, exhibiting a full purse, and then restoring it to his pocket. "We'll divide the money as soon as we get our business disposed of. It's a desperate pity, mother, that Lady Redwoode did not drown in the Pool."

"No such thing, Luke," replied the old woman, briskly. "She'll be a fortune to us. We can keep her shut up here easy enough, and so long as she lives you'll have a hold on Mr. Forsythe. Don't you see?"

"Listen, mother," said Luke, in a hoarse whisper, leaning towards her, while the light fell full on his red and haggard face. "That lawyer, Kenneth, has got track of the business. He's in the village now. In the morning he'll come here. He'll see Rills or Rills's wife and scare the truth out of 'em. Or else he'll search the whole place. Anyhow, he'll find Lady Redwoode, if she be alive!"

The old woman mechanically repeated the last words, too thoroughly frightened, however, to comprehend their meaning.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Luke, huskily. "Lady Redwoode must die to-night. Then I'll go to Rills, and tell him she died in a relapse of fever. I'll make him help me carry the body out to sea. He'll be bound to silence then, by something better than oaths. You understand?"

"Yes, yes. But how to kill her?" whispered the old woman, with burning eyes, while her form shivered as if with cold.

Luke silently displayed his little Indian phial.

"I'll doctor her tea," he said, grimly. "Is chin pot on the hob for her?"

"It was, but she wouldn't drink it—"

Luke compressed his lips, and looked at his brawny arms, muttering—

"I believe a desperate man like me'll prove stronger than a weak, sick woman. She'll take the tea, mother!"

He drew the teapot near to him, and deliberately emptied the contents of the phial into the steaming beverage, and then deposited the pot on the tray, saying—

"Now, mother, we'll take up her ladyship's tea. You go ahead to open the doors and carry the light, while I follow with the tray. A few moments of boldness and courage and

all our danger will be past, and you and I sure of a comfortable fortune for the remainder of our days. Lead on!"

"But she hour's so late!" objected the woman. "It's two o'clock now, Luke. It took you so long to walk from the village, you know. It's too late to do anything to-night. You haven't time to go for Rills, and then come back for the body. It gets light so early now—"

"I have considered all that."

"Besides," said Mrs. Jensen, "her ladyship is sound asleep. If we wake her up this time of night to drink a cup of tea she'll know what is meant, and scream and call for help. If we could only wait till to-morrow, and then put the stuff into her wine!"

"You forget that it's all in the tea!" cried Luke, angrily. "How strangely you act, mother. I tell you it's her life or ours. She's supposed to be dead. Her folks want her to be dead, and dead she shall be before I sleep! As to her screaming, let her scream. Who'll hear her? No one lives near us, and the trees behind the house are the best kind of curtains. Go on!"

Mrs. Jensen made no further objections. If any gleam of womanly pity for the helpless victim upstairs crossed her mind, she stifled it with the reflection that she had gone too far to recede, and that her safety and that of her son required the death of the Baroness.

Taking up the candle, she tremblingly led the way upstairs.

Luke, grim and determined, arranged the tray to better advantage, and followed in his mother's steps.

They passed silently and grimly through the bare and desolate halls, up the hollow, echoing staircase, through the upper corridor, looking in the gloom like spirits of evil. The shadows lay all around them thickly, beyond the circle illuminated by the candle, and the old woman started as if ghosts lurked in those shadows, and shrank within herself, half-dreading the touch of a ghostly hand upon her shoulder.

They reached the prisoner's door. Mrs. Jensen unlocked it, and the two entered Lady Redwoode's room, setting down their burdens upon a table near the entrance.

The Baroness was sleeping. She had not disrobed herself the previous night, but had lain down fully dressed. Her hair had loosened itself during her uneasy slumbers, and fell over her dark dress, completely veiling her shoulders in a mist of pale gold. Her golden lashes lay heavily against her pale cheeks, and her mouth wore an intensely mournful expression.

She was beautiful enough in her sad, grief-haunted slumbers to move the heart of her worst enemy. Looking at her, Mrs. Jensen felt a throb of pity for her approaching fate. Luke thought only of his safety, and the gold he should gain by her death. He touched her ladyship's shoulder, and said, sternly:

"Come, wake up—"

The Baroness started, opened her eyes, and then sprang to her feet, with an air of indignation and command.

"What means this intrusion in my room at this hour?" she demanded, haughtily, looking from one to the other of the couple.

"It means, my lady," answered Luke, "that we have brought your tea."

"My tea! At nearly three in the morning!"

said Lady Redwoode. "This is incredible—"

She paused, her face paling, comprehending from the manner of the intruders that their errand had a deadly, hidden meaning. She endeavoured to conceal her alarm, but it spoke in her quivering lips and dilating eyes.

"The hour ain't quite the fashionable one, my lady, I am aware," said Luke, with assumed politeness. "Your ladyship can't expect rough, simple folks like mother and me to understand how great folks live. Mother says that you have refused tea all day, and you ought to drink it now. Better late than

never, as the saying is. Push the little table this way, mother."

Mrs. Jensen wheeled the small table, which upheld the tea-tray and the candle, nearly into the centre of the room. She then stood quietly near the door, not daring to meet Lady Redwoode's gaze, and heartily wishing the scene ended fatally to the helpless prisoner.

"Your ladyship can wipe out your cup, so as to make sure it ain't poisoned," said Luke, with an attempt at facetiousness. "You will excuse the lateness of the hour, but mother couldn't compel you to take it, and I have just got home—"

"You have been away, then, to-day?" interrupted Lady Redwoode. "I thought so. You have been to Redwoode?"

Luke was tempted to deny the assertion, but he reflected that it was not necessary to speak falsely to his prisoner now, as she was to die so soon. So he responded carelessly in the affirmative.

"You saw Mr. and Mrs. Forsythe?"

"I did, and the Indian woman besides."

"And Mr. Kenneth?" asked her ladyship, eagerly, a wild hope crossing her mind that the old lawyer might have seen Jensen, and suspected something of the truth.

"He wasn't at Redwoode," replied Luke, evasively. "He's been sent away. Mr. Forsythe's his own lawyer or manager, or whatever they call it, now. Mrs. Forsythe was a-wearing the deepest mourning, and her handkerchief looked as if had been dipped in ink. Poor creature! She was a taking on—"

"And you told her I still lived?" cried the Baroness. "What did she say?"

Luke replied by a significant smile, and the words—

"I don't know as it'll do any harm to tell your ladyship the truth. Your daughter concluded it would be a pity to waste all her mourning, to say nothing of her tears, and so—well, you are not wanted back at Redwoode. You are to stay here for the term of your natural life. Now drink a cup of tea, immediately!"

A spasm of pain convulsed the features of the Baroness. Mrs. Jensen was appalled by it. She crept nearer to her son, and twitched his garments, intending to plead for her ladyship's life. Her movement disengaged Luke's newly-acquired purse from his pocket, and it fell to the floor. He hastened to pick it up and restored it to its hiding-place, but not before Lady Redwoode's eyes had caught sight of it.

"I made that purse for Andrew Forsythe," she said, with the paleness of utter despair. "He has given it to you to-day with the price of my life within it. How I have been deceived—"

She hesitated, and her despair gave way to a sudden glow and transport of joy. She forgot her impending fate, her threatening enemies, everything but a sudden blissful assurance that swept over her soul in one great tidal wave.

"The question is settled at last!" she murmured, in a tone inaudible to the two listeners, as if she were speaking to her own soul. "My instinct was at fault. Circumstances have declared the blessed truth. Cecile is not my

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child. Hellice, the wronged, innocent Hellice—I know she is wronged and innocent—is the child of my bosom, the child of my hopes and prayers. Imbecile that I was not to see in Hellice the image of my young husband. Her eyes are like Rolfe Avon's—her voice is his. By heavens! why have I been blinded to the truth till now?"

She felt strangely faint and giddy with her grand discovery. The truth—for such she felt it to be—almost overwhelmed her. Her maternal instincts—so long dormant or stifled—aroused themselves, and verified the declarations of her reason.

Hellice was her own and only child. In that hour she knew it!

Like a chilling blast upon all her ardour and warmth of feeling, came the words of Luke Jensen.

"If your ladyship has rejoiced enough over the news I have brought, perhaps you'll take the tea before it gets cold!"

Lady Redwoode was immediately recalled to the scene around her.

"I want no tea!" she said, endeavouring to speak calmly, although joyful and exultant thrills pulsed through her veins, and refused to be immediately subdued. "Leave me to myself—"

"You ask impossibilities," replied Luke, grimly. "If you refuse to drink the tea peaceably I shall pour it down your throat—there!"

"It is poisoned, then?" said the Baroness, sternly. "I thought so. Cecile has sent me a last gift in the shape of an Indian drug. You have put it in the teapot?"

Mrs. Jensen's countenance was sufficient reply.

The Baroness was thoughtful for a moment. She was much stronger than her enemies suspected, and she was resolved to sell her life dearly. She would never drink the poisoned beverage of her own will. But how could she protect herself, how outwit her enemies?

Mrs. Jensen pulled at her son's sleeve. "It is three o'clock," she whispered. "I heard the hall-clock just strike. Let it go till to-morrow, Luke—"

While Luke's attention was thus momentarily diverted, Lady Redwoode had formed her plan. With a quick spring she gained the little table, caught up the earthen teapot, and dashed it into the open grate, where it fell into fragments, the poisoned beverage trickling in streams over the hearth.

Jensen turned from his mother, uttering a volley of curses. His brute nature was uppermost at that moment.

"You have refused a peaceable death!" he cried, nearly beside himself with rage. "You must die now, and in a way not quite so agreeable. Mother, lock the door and stand against it! Now we'll settle this business!"

He drew from beneath his waistcoat a poniard, which he was wont to carry about his person, and with which he had oftentimes protected himself in fights with fishermen along the coast. With this formidable weapon he advanced upon his victim, clutching her arm. She broke from him, caught up a knife from the table to protect herself, rushed to the window, broke a pane of glass, and through the aperture shrieked long and wildly for help.

Her cry was so unexpected and so unearthly that Jensen involuntarily staggered back.

Lady Redwoode prolonged and repeated her startling cry.

Hark! Was that an answer that came up from below?

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Hellice, by reason of her long voyage from India, was an excellent sailor, so she decided to remain upon deck throughout her night-sail on the *Auld Ailsie*. The early evening was very pleasant. The night had come on early, and the soft gloom of a prolonged twilight mantled the shores and waters. The dash of the waves, the scattering of the salt

spray, had in them something inspiring. The wind was astern, strong, fierce, and sweeping, promising a speedy and successful termination to the journey.

Hellice took possession of the seat prepared for her by her attentive lover, and nestled in her Indian shawl, peaceful and content, but for the great shadow that had fallen upon her heart, with the tidings of Lady Redwoode's death. She indicted no moans nor sighs of pain upon Sir Richard. She smiled up at him brightly, and manifested a spirit of cheerfulness, yet he knew how sore her heart was within her bosom, and how heavily and terribly she had been stricken.

"We shall have a splendid night, Hellice," said the young Baronet, hovering about her with delicate unobtrusive attentions. "See, my uncle is learning navigation!" and smiled. "We may look out for a new machine by which to move through the water—"

He paused, Mr. Haughton's voice, eager and excited, breaking in upon his words. The poor gentleman was declaring that he should invent a fish-shaped boat, to be propelled under the water, coming up occasionally as whales do for air, and that this invention would revolutionize the world.

Even Hellice was obliged to smile at his extravagance, and she expressed a hope that the invention would not be brought into general use in her day.

At this juncture the captain of the *Ailsie* approached the young couple, doffing his cap respectfully.

"At this rate, sir," he said, "we shall be at the Round Bay by midnight. It's only a matter of fifty miles. I've been that way often by way of a cruise."

"I thought the distance was greater," said Sir Richard. "We are fortunate in having so brief a journey, so swift a sloop, and such able seamen."

The captain was pleased with the compliment, but answered, with affected indifference:

"The seamen's so-so, sir, but the *Auld Ailsie* is a beauty, and no mistake. There ain't no craft on this coast of her size that can distance her, and I'm glad o' that, for we're likely to want her to show her legs. You see, sir, I've been hearin' tell how the young lady here has been pursued by t' Rookery chaps, and I've an idea that they've fitted out a sloop here, and are coming out to attack us as we approach."

"They would hardly dare to do that, I think," said Sir Richard, thoughtfully, disturbed, in spite of himself.

"Dare!" said the skipper. "According to what I hear, there ain't nothin' but what that Indian chap would dare! He's played robber, they say, and a man that'll play robber will play pirate if he can get the chance. There's no vessels cruisin' this way, and there don't happen to be any fishing craft in the vicinity—"

"Let us go back, Richard," pleaded Hellice. "You and Mr. Haughton and these sailors must not be endangered on my account."

"But, Hellice, you are not safe at the manse. It will not be safe for us to proceed to a railway station unguarded. I know of no mode of travel so easy for us as this. We will keep on—unless the captain here wishes to turn back."

"Then we'll keep on!" declared the owner of the sloop. "There's nothin' I like better than a scrimmage now and then. I feel just in the humour for one to-night. I may be mistaken after all, but if that Indian fellow is bent on having the girl, nothing's easier for him than to buy a sloop, hire a fisherman or two to manage it, and then put his men aboard and chase us. I wish he may try it."

"Mr. Anchester would hardly dare be so lawless," said Sir Richard, musingly. "He has men, instead of a weak girl, to deal with now. Yet—how are we off for arms, captain?"

"I've got the two nature gave me, sir, and they're in prime order," replied the skipper, flourishing his brawny, stalwart members.

"I did not mean to be understood so literally," replied the Baronet, smiling. "I have a couple of revolvers, and my uncle is similarly provided for. You can take one, if necessary, and—"

"I can take another!" said Hellice, determinedly. "Do not object, Richard. One of the men must mind the tiller. The fourth weapon would be unused but for me. I shot a tiger once in India—I did, indeed—and you need not fear that I would shrink from shooting a creature more bloodthirsty than a tiger, when my life depended upon my freedom!"

"Poor little valiant!" said the Baronet, in a caressing under-tone. "You would protect your life and honour, but I shall be able to do it for you. That little hand shall never be raised in self-defence while I have a spark of life remaining. Trust in me, my darling. It will nerve my arm to know that you are leaning upon it!"

Hellice answered by a look of perfect love and trust. She made no further allusion to her power of self-defence, feeling a serene confidence in the strength and ability of her lover to defend her.

Sir Richard deemed it prudent to make all preparations for defence. He examined his pistols and distributed them to the best advantage. He gave his uncle instructions, which Mr. Haughton received with martial ardour, promising to distinguish himself with coolness and bravery in the event of an engagement.

The man at the tiller received his orders, and the promise of a handsome reward for his services, provided he should keep at his post.

The Baronet also engaged himself to double the skipper's liberal pay in case of an attack from Mr. Anchester, and to make good any damage that might occur to the *Auld Ailsie*.

Matters being thus arranged, nothing remained but to await the issue.

The sloop flew on before the wind, which, had it not been fair, must have been termed a gale. The white-crested waves flew past as if they had been live creatures in deadly fear. The soft night-gloom deepened. A few stars appeared in the leaden sky.

The coast, so rugged, so full of heavy rocks and boulders, looked grim, strange, and spectral. The fishermen's cottages, nestled here and there on the sands, looked like dark mounds, fit only for the habitation of strange and unreal beings.

On flew the sloop like a live thing. The hamlet, the manse, the parish church, were all left behind. Coves, bays, and indentations all disappeared behind them. The cove which Hellice had once visited with Sandy, the spot where Mr. Anchester had asked her to become his wife, was approached.

This cove was protected by two long arms reaching out into the sea, two arms piled high with rocks that completely concealed whatever might be within.

Perhaps Mr. Anchester lay at the entrance like a spider watching for its prey! Perhaps at the moment they came abreast of him he would rush out and drag them to his den, as the cove might be called. For Sir Richard and his men there was no danger save in open encounter. For Hellice—

"He is there! He is there! I feel it!" whispered the maiden, in sudden agitation. "Oh, for a friendly cloud to hide us from his view!"

By a single gesture, Sir Richard commanded his uncle and the men to be on their guard. The man at the tiller nodded significantly. Mr. Haughton and the skipper held their weapons ready for instant use.

"Go down into the cabin, my darling," whispered the Baronet to his betrothed. "Should there be an attack, you are in danger here."

Hellice hesitated a moment. She was inclined to share her lover's dangers to the utmost, but a reflection that her presence might unnerve him decided her to obedience. She arose quietly, and allowed him to escort her to the close little cabin, from which he pro-

maised to release her at the earliest possible moment.

In the little doorway he paused to gather her in his arms and bid her trust in him, then he went back to his duties, leaving her to solitude and prayer.

"The young lady's wish has come true, was the whispered salutation of the skipper, as he emerged on the deck. "It's darker than it was, and we're at some distance from the shore. We may get past after all without trouble."

It was true that the sky had clouded over, but the shadows would soon be past, and the brightness greater than before by contrast. To take advantage of the temporary gloom became at once the object of the voyagers.

The sloop was straining under every stitch of canvas. She was at a little distance from the projecting points of lands. She had greatly the advantage of any hidden enemy, and her skipper was resolved to maintain it.

They approached the first point. They shot past it. They flew on through the gloom and the foaming waves.

"We are safe!" cried Mr. Haughton. "There's no sloop there!"

Even as he spoke out sprang from the shadows a sloop, every sail set. She darted in swift pursuit. Her size was nearly that of the *Auld Ailsie*, and a half-score of men crowded her deck.

Conspicuous among these men was the giant form of Mr. Anchester.

"Heave to, there!" he shouted. "Heave to, I say!"

"What for?" asked the *Auld Ailsie's* skipper, tantalisingly.

"I want my wife. She's on board your craft. Yield her up, or I'll sink you."

"His wife!" said Sir Richard, absolutely startled at Mr. Anchester's audacity. "The miserable villain! Make him no answer, captain. We've got the start of him. Show him the heels of the *Ailsie*!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said the well-pleased skipper. "We've got the start of him, as you say. 'A stern chase is a long chase,' as the sayin' is. I know that boat he's got. It's a decentish one, sir, as boats go, but she can't hold a candle to the *Ailsie*!"

The comparative merits of the two vessels was to be put to the test. Annoyed at the contemptuous silence with which his demand had been met, Mr. Anchester was put to the extremity of savage recklessness. He was determined that the prize he so longed for should not slip through his hands. He would risk everything to obtain Hellice again—for to lose her would be to him absolute ruin!

He gave his orders fiercely, and his men—seamen and Rookery labourers—were eager to do his bidding, he having not only assured them that he simply sought to obtain possession of his lawfully-married wife, but promised them immunity from the laws, and a handsome sum of money, in case of Hellice's recovery.

On the one vessel was courageous resistance to wrong; on the other a complete and reckless desperation.

The pursuer held a course nearer to the land, where the wind was less sweeping, and the *Ailsie* thus gained upon her. Mr. Anchester ordered the sloop to shoot out into the track of the chase, by which movement he lost time, and gave the *Ailsie* still further the advantage.

Sir Richard and his companions marked this favouring circumstance with delight and satisfaction.

"We're leaving her behind!" said the skipper. "Ah!"

This exclamation was caused by a shot that came whizzing from the pursuing sloop, passing in close proximity to his ear.

"Will you heave to, there?" cried Mr. Anchester, in a wild and savage shout. "If you won't, take that!"

Another shot whizzed past the man, at the

tiller, causing him to assume an involuntary crouching posture.

"They're tryin' to pick Tom off," cried the skipper. "Keep your head down, Tom. It won't do to lose your life now that you have got a chance to make it comfortable."

Tom acknowledged the justice of this remark by presenting as small a target to the enemy as was possible.

It seemed as though the captain of the *Ailsie* had overrated the speed of his vessel, for it soon became apparent that the pursuer was gaining on the chase. It bounded over the waters like a bird with outstretched wings, and the *Ailsie* flew ahead with swift but flourishing motion, as if overcome by fright.

"They are certainly gaining!" said the Baronet, uneasily.

"Still, a stern chase 's a long chase," replied the captain, an axiom which evidently afforded him considerable comfort. "I didn't think there was so much life in that craft!"

On along the shadowy coast, through the light gloom sped the two vessels. They passed fishing villages and hamlets, wrapped in darkness, without observing them. The wind increased, rendering their speed absolutely fearful, to any in less danger or less excitement than they.

Mr. Anchester seemed mad with desperation, and Sir Richard stood up, calm and resolute, encouraging his men, and determined to resist his enemy to the death.

Again and again came the cry to heave to. Again and again came rifle-shots from the pursuing sloop. Still no injury had been done, and still the owner and seaman of the *Ailsie* were strong in their determination to stand by their passengers.

The strange chase was continued for hours, and the pursuer continued to gain on the pursued. A wild elation began to burn in Mr. Anchester's heart. He towered head and shoulders above his men, his face white with rage, his black locks blowing wildly in the wind, and his entire appearance more demonic than human.

"Give me my wife!" he shouted, at last, his voice sounding directly in the ears of the Baronet, so close had he approached the *Ailsie*. "If you longer refuse, I'll riddle your old sloop, and take the girl by force."

"Do it, if you can!" replied Sir Richard.

"The girl belongs to me, Sir Richard Haughton!" cried Mr. Anchester, hoarsely. "She was married to me in the Rookery chapel. She fled from me at the very altar—but she is my wife, and all the powers on earth cannot take her from me! Do not tempt me too far. I'm a desperate man—"

"A desperate animal, you'd better say!" said Mr. William Haughton, unable to keep silence longer. "You had better not tempt me too far, Mr. Anchester. It seems that there are two of us can handle weapons—"

Mr. Anchester cut the remark short by a pistol-shot.

The distance between the vessels had so diminished that words in an ordinary tone could be heard from one to the other. The two miserable rifles that Mr. Anchester had been able to pick up at the Rookery were of no further use. There were plenty of pistols, however, on the pursuing craft, several of them having been obtained at the nearest town, after Mr. Anchester's adventure with Sir Richard. These weapons were now to be brought into requisition.

"You absolutely refuse to yield up the girl?" shouted Mr. Anchester.

Sir Richard replied only by a contemptuous silence.

"Then give it to 'em, my lads!" commanded the East Indian, hoarse with rage. "Fire all at once. Fire!"

(To be continued next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2021. Back numbers can be obtained through any news-agent.)

French Girl or English Girl?

WHICH IS THE PRETTIER DANCER?

French maids are renowned for their vivaciousness in dancing; English damsels for their stateliness. The question is, which characteristic is most pleasing. An important point, however, which must not be overlooked, is that of health and strength. No person can dance well unless in good health. Languor, dizziness, and weakness—which invariably arise out of indigestion—are ailments which make life miserable and devoid of happiness. Bile Beans for Biliousness, however, are a certain cure for indigestion, and also for skin eruptions, pimples, and all blood impurities. Proof of this is given in the case of Mr. George Blanchard, of Morley Street, Kettering.

Mr. Blanchard was recently interviewed by a "Kettering Guardian" reporter, and he told, for the purpose of publication, the following startling facts:—

"It will be seventeen years ago, that first I began to suffer from indigestion. This became chronic, and in the end I was brought down to the threshold of death. I had acute pains in the stomach and right side, with continual belching and rifting, and with occasional vomiting of my food. After a meal I felt it would be a relief to vomit. Sometimes in a morning I should feel fairly well, but before I got to work the pains would come on. I should also be taken with languor and dizziness, and would perspire terribly. Sometimes I was so bad that my mates used to say, 'He'll die at work.' At other times I should be unable to go to my work for a week or a fortnight at a time. All this while I was losing flesh. I could only take liquid food, and I became so wasted that my limbs were like those of a baby. I had medical advice, but got no better. The doctor said he could do nothing for me, and I should never again be better. I fully believed that I was about to die. Owing to my acute sufferings life had lost its pleasures, and death had lost the terrors it would have for a healthy person. At this climax my wife read about Bile Beans for Biliousness, and the wonderful cures they had effected. We had some procured, and I took them. By the time I had finished the second box I felt a great deal better. Bit by bit they improved me, and my spirits began to revive. At last I became so vastly improved that I could once more digest solid food. The pains after eating, the dizziness, and all the other symptoms of my long illness gradually disappeared—my strength increased, I regained the flesh I had lost, and could once more eat and enjoy my meals. I am now perfectly restored to health, and can do a hard day's work. Indeed I am better than I have been before for twenty years. A few months back I could not bear anyone to even touch me on the chest, but now, look here! (Here Mr. Blanchard beat his chest energetically.) It seems impossible to believe that so great a change could be brought about in any man as Bile Beans have effected in me," he continued; "and I sometimes wonder what the doctors who attended me, and gave me up, would say if they could see me now." Such is the record of this wonderful case. Bile Beans for Biliousness, which effected the above cure, are absolutely unequalled for all cases of indigestion of however long standing. They are also a certain cure for dizziness, pains in the back and chest, loss of appetite, weakness, flatulence, colds, chills, liver and kidney disorders, sleeplessness, palpitation, anaemia, all female ailments, constipation, piles, and as a preventative of influenza. Obtainable of all chemists, or post free from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 and 120, London Wall, London, E.C., upon receipt of price one and three halfpence or two and nine.

ONLY 370 islands in the Indian Ocean are inhabited. The total number is 16,300.

WHEN a woman is thoroughly tired, she finds nothing so refreshing as a nice long talk.

Facetiae

JACK: "A friend in need is a friend indeed."
Tom: "Um—ye—yes—if he doesn't need too much."

If you don't want to be robbed of your good name, don't have it inscribed upon your umbrella.

An English publisher announces a new work entitled, "He Always Pleases His Wife." It is fiction.

SURE ENOUGH:—"Do you believe in fate, Pat?" "Sure, an' phwat would we stand on widout them?"

SHE: "Miss Rodney always looks well for one who has so little to dress on." He: "Yes, she is rather thin."

"GARDENING is a delightful occupation."
"Of course, if one could procure a new back-bone every morning."

FAXON: "Another death by forgetting to turn off the gas, Jackson." "Yes. This seems to be a gas-trick fever."

MR. SNOOPS: "Snippe, your chickens come over into my yard." Mr. Snippe: "Yes, and they do not come back."

"He can trace his ancestry back to the flood." O. pshaw! That's nothing. Everybody was in the swim then."

"A MARRIAGE may sometimes be a failure," remarked old Mrs. Ely, "but a funeral is always bound to be a success."

Too much study is said to affect the mind; and we know of a number of cases where it would affect it very favourably.

A RECENTLY-PUBLISHED book is entitled "Half-hours with Insects." What a lively half-hour one can have with a bee!

EDITH: "It's little things that tell in this life." Alice: "Well, you'd think so if you had two small brothers, as I have."

BRAGO (pompously): "Sir, I am a self-made man!" Flagg: "I daresay; you look like the kind of a man you'd be apt to make."

GEORGE: "Misfortune has its recompense." Ethel: "How can you make that out?" George: "The homely girl can eat onions."

"Now, ma'am," said the English servant, "ow will you ave the duck to-day? Will you heat it cold, or shall I eat it for you?"

The man who is a long time making up his mind may arrive at a correct judgment; but it is generally too late to be of any use to him.

Why was Noah the greatest financier that ever lived? Because he floated a limited liability company when all the rest of the world was in liquidation.

He: "Did my voice fill the room while I was singing?" She: "On the contrary, it had the opposite effect. A number of the audience went out."

FASHIONABLE Lady: "What is the matter with me, doctor?" "Please tell me the symptoms." "There are none, doctor, and that's what worries me."

HOST: "Just another wee drap fore you go—"
Guest: "Na, na, a'll tak nae mair! I'm in a new lodgin', and I'm na vera weel acquainted with the stairs!"

"Yes, he is dead. We shall have nothing more from his pen," said Mr. Brown sadly. "But he may write a posthumous book, you know," put in Mrs. Brown cheerfully.

PHOTOGRAPHER: "If you please, ma'am, just a little smile. Thank you; a little more; look pleasant, you know. Now you may resume your natural expression; thank you."

GEORGE: "Tommy, is your sister in?" "Yes, but you'll have to wait a long time 'cos she's sewing a button on a coat." "Oh, that won't take long; I'll wait." "I wouldn't; there's a man in the coat."

THE only confectionery a girl who works in a candy store cares for after a while is sweet hearts.

JUSTICE DUFFY: "Have you ever taken an oath?" Criminal: "Several times." "When was that?" "When I was in love."

CRITIC: "The greatest writers make mistakes." Author: "Yes, every writer is liable to put his muddle brush into the ink-bottle."

"WHAT is the difference between being toasted and being roasted?" "One is a moist proceeding, and the other an exceedingly dry one."

FRANK: "Don't you admire Stella's piano execution?" May: "I do indeed! It isn't every girl who can slaughter four composers in one evening."

"CAN you lend me a fiver, Jack?" "I can; here it is." "I can never repay your kindness." "Never mind; repay the fiver, and let the kindness go."

"WAITER, I've been here a full hour," said Chappie, impatiently. "I've been here since seven a.m.," returned the waiter. "It's tiresome, ain't it?"

MRS. SLIMDIET: "The city water company has raised my rates. Old Boarder: "They must have found out that we have salt mackerel for breakfast."

"WHY, Janet! What in the world is the matter with Fido?" "He's got a severe cold, dear. I think I must have left his muzzle off too suddenly, you know."

JOHNIE (sobbing): "Does it really h-h-hurt you to wh- whip me, mamma?" Ma: "Yes, my son; very much more than it hurts you." Johnny (drying his eyes): "I'm so glad!"

PRIMES: "How absurd it is in Hawley to be always trying to prevent people from knowing his age! I can't understand it." Secundus: "I can. He has a twin sister in society, man."

"YOUR uncle will probably remember you when making his will." "Confound it! that's what I'm afraid of. If he remembers me, it's all up with me."

BERTHA (nestling to him in an I-wish-that-would-last-for-ever-without-intervals-for-refreshments sort of way): "What did papa say?" Claud: "Oh, when I told him what I wanted, he said, 'Allow me to show you the door.' And I looked at it and said it was a very nice door and well-built, and would last for years with care; and then he laughed and said I was a young vagabond and I might have you."

"REMEMBER, boys," said the teacher, who, being still new at the business, knew not what else to say to make an impression, "that in the bright lexicon of youth there's no such word as fail." After a few moments, a boy raised his hand. "Well, what is it, Socrates?" asked the teacher. "I was merely going to suggest," replied the youngster, "that if such is the case, it would be advisable to write to the publishers of that lexicon and call their attention to the omission."

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Gems

Do you think that the infinite God cannot all and satisfy your heart?

Be what you wish others to become. Let yourself, and not your words only, preach.

Whatever you dislike in another, take care to correct in yourself.

The most permanent attachments are those of which the stream glides smoothly and silently. Custom sits comfortably by the drawing-room fire, long after sentiment has been turned out of doors into the streets.

All the evil we do not commit, all the temptations to which we do not consent, or which never visit us, all our holy thoughts and good intentions, all our longings after that which is right, are so many witnesses of His loving kindness towards us. How could He help you thus unless He cared for you?

A LOVER'S SONG.

Be these written words of mine
Folded buds upon Love's vine,
Waiting for the sun and dew,
For the eyes and lips of you.

As you read them they shall wake
Into happiness and make
Song and fragrance, fresh and new,
In the voice and kiss of you.

And when into bloom they blow,
And their souls of beauty show,
You shall find their secret true;
Take it to the heart of you!

PERFORATING PAPER.

It is difficult to realise that the art of perforating paper was unknown fifty years ago. Prior to 1854 postage stamps were issued in sheets, the purchaser having to cut them up the way he found most convenient. In 1848 an Irishman named Archer introduced a machine for cutting small slits around each stamp. This was tried by the postal authorities, but for some unexplained reason it did not work to their satisfaction, and, notwithstanding that Archer went to great trouble and expense in altering the machine so as to meet the objections, it was refused by the Government. Archer then constructed an entirely new machine, which cut out circular holes. He received sufficient encouragement to induce him still further to improve his invention, when, in 1851, after three years' continual labour, the Treasury proposed to buy the patent rights for £750. This parsimonious offer was, of course, refused, as Archer had spent considerably more than this on his various experimental machines. Eventually the matter was placed before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, and the pertinacious inventor was awarded £5,000, which, considering his apparatus in a few years saved the Government many thousands of pounds, was not excessive.

LOVE.

The wanton minddrops whisper love
To listening blades of grass;
The winds are singing lovesongs to
Each spring and spray they pass,
And love is in the maiden's heart
Who prisms before her glass.

Ere long the sun with smiles of love
Will greet the peeping frond,
And soon the bullfrog's voice shall charm
His mistress in the pond—
A lover hums a lovesong while
His evening clothes are donned.

The maiden greets him at the door,
A glad thrill rushes through her;
She leads him to the parlour, where
She waits for him to woo her,
And there the foolish fellow talks
About the weather to her.

Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

SUBSCRIBER.—The first anniversary of a wedding is known as the paper anniversary.

H. K. T.—(1) For grandparents mourning is worn three or six months. A brief rule is to wear mourning until all your friends know you are wearing it, then leave it off. (2) Eat salad with a fork.

MRS. T. (Attercliff).—You did not give a *non de plume* in your letter, so that I am obliged to indicate the answer by your initial and town, otherwise you would not recognise it. Hair on the face is, as you say, a great disfigurement, and I only know of one sure method of removing it, and that is by electrolysis, but this process is expensive.

GERALDINE.—My answer to your letter is short, but none the less sincere. A girl of sixteen is far too young to have callers. Stick to your school books until you have passed your examinations. You are having your happiest days—do not spoil them by rushing into what you call a love affair.

MARY.—If you wish to rid yourself of the young man, do not show a preference for his society in any way. Treat him with such frank friendliness that he must see you do not regard him as a lover. Do not accept his attentions in any way you can reasonably avoid. Unless the man be an arrant coxcomb, he will soon comprehend your design and thank you for sparing him the mortification of a direct refusal.

BENJAMIN.—Bread at dinner is only served with soup, and then it is placed upon the cloth. At other meals a little bread-and-butter plate is supplied.

BROWNIE.—Children are not supposed to be present at dinner—that is, late dinner—until they are sixteen years old, and even not then at a formal function. Early hours are the fashion, and children, until they are fifteen, are supposed to be in bed by nine o'clock.

A READER (Burnley).—The impossibility of producing "perpetual motion" has long been demonstrated, but still ignorant and ambitious inventors continue to try for it. I would advise you to turn your inventive genius—if you have any—toward the discovery of some article that is an acknowledged requirement and will at once come into general use.

ROMAN.—A London watchmaker having made a watch for George III., which on being shown to Louis XVIII., he was so delighted with it he requested the watchmaker to make him one somewhat similar. The watch was in due time finished and presented by the maker in person. The King, though greatly pleased with the workmanship it exhibited, yet determined to find some fault, maintained that four strokes should represent the hour four and not IV. The maker was therefore compelled to change the numeral IV. into IIII. on the dial-plate, and thus it is there presented to us ever since.

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reproduced by the Company.

S. N. JONES (Portsmouth).—Lemons may be kept fresh for several months by putting them in a clean, tight cask or jar, and covering them with cold water. The water must be changed at least every other day, and the cask or jar kept in a cool place.

DISSATISFIED.—Money is a nice thing to have, but it is not absolutely necessary to have barrels of it. Why anybody who has a few moments each day, good books to read and nice friends to know should be dissatisfied with life is beyond my understanding. Happiness is in your own heart. Dig it out.

EDITH R.—Here is the formula which you have requested for a liquid enamel:—Paraffine, sixty grains; chloroform, two ounces; oil of rose, three drops; carmine enough to colour a bright pink. Mix the carmine with the oil of rose, add the chloroform and paraffine wax. Apply sparingly as a polish to the nails, with a small camel's hair brush.

A. D. C. (Stalybridge).—According to the best medical authority, a good hearty laugh is a stimulus to the vital force, verifying the old saw "that it is better to laugh than be crying." Certainly, to be able to laugh heartily must indicate, to even the dullest mind, that the ability to so enjoy the ludicrous and amusing is a symptom of good health and good spirits to an eminent degree.

WOODEN TOWER.—Pembroke, in Herefordshire, has a detached wooden tower quite close to the church on the north side. It is of singular construction, its wooden framework being particularly curious. There is a tower of oak framework containing two bells in the churchyard at Brookland, in Romney Marsh. In 1823, or thereabouts, a wooden steeple was put upon the square stone tower of St. Sidwell's Church, Exeter. It has only lately been removed.

LOVAS.—I do not expect that my gentle readers will do more than half the things I tell them, but if they do that much they will be making a good start anyhow—and that's something. No doubt you used your complexion brush too vigorously right at the start. Don't pummel, just get your face clean. A sensitive skin will often feel a bit tender the first few days of the brush treatment. You'll come out all right. Touch the lone pimple with spirits of camphor. That little cut near the thumb nail should be bathed night and morning in warm solution of boric acid.

PO.—A simple and harmless method of darkening the eyebrows and eyelashes is the use of a pencil which may be procured at any drug store. A burned clove or cork is also used for this purpose. If you prefer a dye, however, try the following, which is perfectly harmless and a favourite with French women:—Gum arabic, four drams; Indian ink, seven drams; rosewater, one pint. Powder the ink and the gum, and triturate small quantities of the powder with rosewater till a uniform black liquid results, absolutely free from granules. Then put the liquid into a bottle and pour over it the remainder of the rosewater. It may be applied with a sable pencil or a very tiny brush.

HARRIET.—You were right not to use the pomades recommended for the removal of other scars on your eyebrows. Try the following:—Oxide of zinc, five centigrammes; subacetate of lead, five centigrammes; oil of sweet almonds, fifty centigrammes; vaseline, six grams; tincture benzoin, five drops. Have the pomade compounded by a careful chemist and be careful to let none escape into the eyes when using it. It is quite proper to announce the persons introduced as your friends, though it is not a usual custom to society. One more frequently says, "Mr. Blank, allow me to present you to Miss Blank." If the persons have previously heard much of each other, the lady might offer her hand; otherwise she simply bows her recognition or acknowledges any compliment that may be paid her.

MARY JANE.—There is nothing that I could recommend to remove the fire stains from your books without doing them more injury. The safest and cheapest plan in the end would be to send them to a bookbinder and have them done all over.

SHIRLEY.—I give you a formula which will greatly improve the condition of your hair: Tincture of cantharides (alcoholic), 1 ounce; spirits of rosemary, 1 1-2 ounce; glycerine, 1 1-2 ounce; aromatic vinegar, 1 1-2 ounce; rosewater, 3 ounces. Wash the hair with the yolk of an egg mixed with a pint of rain-water and a tablespoonful of good whisky at least once in two weeks.

HELLICE is a great advocate of the cause of temperance, and having accepted an invitation to dine, where she is sure she will be served with the different courses, she wishes to know how to act so as not to give offence. Many people do not take wine, and a failure to do so causes no unpleasant conduct. If it is a small dinner, decline the wines. If a large affair, and the glasses are filled, receive them without comment, but do not partake of their contents.

Mrs. D.—If taken three times daily, a wineglass of sassafras tea is beneficial to satisfy the craving for food when dieting, as it diminishes the appetite for forbidden dainties. When one is trying to lose flesh, the sooner the habit of drinking during meals is discontinued the more immediate are the results in the loss of weight. It is not necessary to abstain from all vegetables. Tomatoes, lettuce, spinach, and watercress may all be taken in moderation.

A READER.—Deep breathing and vocal culture will give one a high, fine chest. Look at the grand opera singers; you can't get round them with a clothes line, to say nothing of tape measures. Every time you think of it take a deep, long breath, exhaling very slowly. After awhile real breathing will become a habit, and the first thing you know you will have a pretty figure, round, full throat, high chest, dainty "souple" waist, and pretty back. Cold water baths every morning are splendid.

L. A. D.—In extreme cases of falling hair there is nothing so speedy in its benefits as electric treatment and massage. The tonic you have used may not be advisable for your particular case. There are few infallible cures, and hair tonics, like medicines, will not heal everybody's troubles. Try this, applying every night and rubbing well into the scalp: Seven ounces of listerine, one-half ounce of tincture of cartharides, one dram of bisulphate of quinine. Do not brush the hair while it is in its moulting season. Remember that general health has much to do with it.

FLORA.—Don't put water on your hair when you comb it. That makes one's halo both stringy and unbeautiful. Every fortnight shampoo your crown with seven eggs and plenty of water, rinsing with a bath spray. Pure white castile soap is usually pretty safe for general toilet use. A girl should have just as many shirtwaists as are necessary for comfort and cleanliness—if she can get them, of course. If she can't, she's got to wash them out often, that's all. Use a complexion brush, warm water, castile soap, and a little elbow grease every night and your face won't be shot with blackheads. Bathing your neck with alcohol will whiten it. Afterwards rub in cocoa-butter or orange flower skin food.

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